

Thesis

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**THE FICTION OF WILLIAM GOLDING:  
A STUDY IN CONTRADICTIONS**

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For my parents  
and for  
David Punter

## ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes a study of the contradictions embedded in Golding's fiction. It is difficult, as I attempt to show, to treat Golding under the rubric of revolutionary, conservative, liberal humanist, optimistic or pessimistic writer separately. Golding's fiction shows a mind which is at once creative and enmeshed in the mysteries of the universe. However, I attempt in this study to shed light on the many contradictions which I think are present in his work. For this purpose, I concentrate on eight novels as the objects of my analysis. Lord of the Flies, Golding's first novel, displays a contradiction which is at the heart of Golding's vision. While Golding tries hard to show the hardness of man's heart, he risks falling into pointlessness if the project were to end only on this note. Golding is caught up in the dilemma of at once believing in Original Sin and wanting to see an alternative future for humankind. If man is "originally" incapable of harmonious living, how is he ever to achieve this harmony? In Pincher Martin, Golding delves deeper into a religious dogmatism which believes in individual greed. This greed, however, threatens ultimately to undo the "system" within which it exists. But if Golding tries hard to eliminate this individual greed, how then can he emphasise that man is originally sinful? With the removal of this greed and many other sins with it, man is likely to become "pure", something which Golding does not believe in. In Free Fall, Golding explores the idea of art for art's sake. One of the problems of this idea is that it leaves the political implications of any situation completely intact. The Spire enacts a different kind of contradiction. Jocelin, in one sense a saintly figure who can "see" more intuitively than the others, is driven into despair at his own creation. He ultimately loses faith in his own "powerful" vision. In The Paper Men, Golding embarks on a new way of treating his own themes. In its technique, this novel is closer than any of the others to postmodernist literature in its permutations, displacements, and indecisiveness. As for the trilogy, here Golding reaches a position where he can confidently be described as a liberal humanist. The trilogy paradoxically shows Golding at his best. The contradictions of the protagonist Edmund Talbot "reflect" those of a social class that has within it the features of both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. At the end, Golding does not "solve" these contradictions and he leaves us with a proposition that could see the end of all literary criticism and analysis. It is in the conclusion to this study that I address this problem.

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"Mad call I it, for to define true madness,  
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?"

(HAMLET II. 2.)

"If you have detected contradictions and some screaming  
fallacies in what I have said, I wish you luck."

(Sir William Golding)

## Chapter One

### Introduction: Groping Our Way Through Contradictions

"The amount of meaning is in exact proportion to the presence of death and the power of decay."<sup>1</sup>

(Walter Benjamin)

Perhaps in no other *oeuvre* can we discern the intense recurrence of death as vividly as we do in Golding's fiction. Golding, born in 1911, seems to have been preoccupied with death from his early childhood. But death pure and simple, death, that is, as a biological fact, is only one of the aspects that concern him in his work:

The exploration of the physical world is an art, with all the attendant aesthetic pleasures; but the knowledge we get from it is not immediately applicable to the problems that we have on hand. But history is a kind of selfknowledge, and it may be with care that selfknowledge will be sufficient to give us the right clue to our behaviour in the future. I say a clue; for we stand today in the same general condition as we have always stood, under sentence of death.<sup>2</sup>

We shall see later how Golding laments what he considers to be the gradual death of the spiritual part of man. Before that, however, let me point out the paradox implied above in Benjamin's quotation. Benjamin maintains that the more powerful decay is and the more death prevails, the more meaning we get, whatever the word "meaning" means in this context. It seems to be a paradox to have the matter laid out in this way since one would expect more meaning to come with life rather than death.

But this paradox is perhaps related to the symbology of death and resurrection in the sense that there is no resurrection without death. In Golding's passage quoted above, we stand under sentence of death; yet Golding is already looking towards a future. It is urgent for Golding that we should be guided by our selfknowledge in order for us to be "saved" from death. In a further attempt, Golding tries to relate our selfknowledge to history itself, making our own history the yardstick with which to measure our own behaviour. It is these three concerns, death, resurrection (the future), and the urgency of steering our lives towards a better future, that are most important in Golding's fiction. But if it is only through death that we can achieve resurrection, and if it is only through the presence of wicked or sinful behaviour that we learn about the presence of an alternative better behaviour, might not this process suggest the presence of a contradiction at the heart of human life?

But to return to the concept of the future: can Golding hope for a better future if he does not already think that man is capable of having such a future in the first place? Golding certainly hopes for a better future and he seems to believe implicitly that man is capable of generating such a future. Otherwise, the whole enterprise of writing about this subject would be useless and self-defeating. Golding does not write his novels only to tell us that man

can be evil or that man is behaving wickedly. Surely the First World War and the Second World War constitute a sufficient historical proof that man can be evil. Rather, Golding wants to point out a better way of living because he realizes that man is capable of embracing that kind of life. We will see later on how Golding praises man, man who he thinks can produce evil as a bee produces honey, for building great edifices such as spires and pyramids and for being capable of reaching the highest good at certain periods of history. Thus the following question arises: "How can the same humanity which is potentially capable of generating a good future immerse itself in what is clearly and actually an evil present?" It would be unrealistic for a man to brand all other human beings as evil and hopeless and at the same time absolve himself as a human being from this accusation. Alternatively, it would be a fruitless enterprise for humanity to engage itself in hoping for a better future knowing already that humanity cannot possibly have a better future. It would seem then that there is an implicit contradiction here related to the actual destruction of nature and man by man himself and the potential of man to create and improve nature and himself. This contradiction reflects itself very clearly in Golding as a kind of simultaneous pessimism and optimism. For one to be at once pessimistic and optimistic about the same future of man, is certainly to be involved in exploring a stark contradiction. But if

we cannot be decisive about the creative and destructive sides of man, how can we come to terms with this seemingly permanent contradiction? Is it possible that man's violent nature will be tamed in the future generating through this process a better future for humanity in general? It is this question which lurks at the back of Golding's mind. We all know that Golding is a pessimist. However, in the following quotation, we will see how Golding tries to grapple with the problem of hoping for a better, different future knowing already that man can be so destructive. The quotation is taken from the "Nobel Lecture" delivered in Stockholm, 7 December 1983:

Twenty-five years ago I accepted the label "pessimist" thoughtlessly, without realizing that it was going to be tied to my tail, as it were, in something the way that, to take an example from another art, Rachmaninov's famous Prelude in C sharp minor was tied to him. No audience would allow him off the concert platform until he played it. Similarly critics have dug into my books until they could come up with something that looked utterly hopeless. I can't think why. I don't feel hopeless myself. Indeed, I tried to reverse the process by explaining myself. Under some critical interrogation I named myself a universal pessimist but a cosmic optimist....<sup>3</sup>

Towards the end of this quotation, we can see clearly some of the problems in Golding's stance. We notice how he tries to find an explanation by projecting his optimism towards the cosmos and his pessimism towards the universe. But does the real, historical man not inhabit both the universe and the cosmos at once? It is abundantly clear that Golding's description of himself as

a universal pessimist and a cosmic optimist is an unmistakable sign of struggling with both sides of human nature, the creative and the destructive, in a manner which reveals a wondering mind rather than a decisive stance about which side is likely to prevail in the impenetrable future. Golding himself is highly aware of this difficulty when he says: "I am by nature an optimist; but a defective logic\_\_ or a logic which I sometimes hope desperately is defective\_\_ makes a pessimist of me."<sup>4</sup> It is clear that what Golding means by a defective logic relates to the fact that the destruction of nature by man which has been going on for centuries might leave one convinced that man is a hopeless case, and that therefore optimism would seem to be out of date. Yet Golding is in one sense an optimist.

In this study I will concentrate on contradictions of different aspects in Golding's works. I shall attempt to explain the nature of the contradictions as well as the difference between those which seem to revolve around Golding himself and those which are vividly "dramatised" in his fiction. Through his novels, Golding goads us into looking at two possibilities, albeit two contradictory ones, concerning man's future. Man can either have a better future, something which would allow us to think of different ways of getting there, or he cannot have a better future, in which case our project to find that future would not get off the ground. And yet, it is

obvious that man can have a better future if he follows the right path or alternatively a worse future if he still persists in his selfishness. We may want to say that man is not a fixed bundle of characteristics but rather a flexible, malleable alloy that can be fashioned according to the way of life he chooses. It would seem, thus, that it is up to man to choose the right path by following certain "righteous" principles. Alternatively, if that same man chooses to do wrong, and we are told that he is free to do so, then he certainly chooses the wrong path, the evil way of doing things. However, this would seem to be a very simplistic account of things for two reasons. First, it is unlikely that certain criteria of right and wrong would exist in an absolute way so that man can be sure that he is doing the right thing rather than the wrong one. And if such absolutism cannot exist, can we decide what is right and what is wrong for a century, a decade, or even a year? If not, how can we then say that man is free to choose the right path instead of the wrong one? Golding is acutely aware of the problem, and offers his own understanding of it:

We need more humanity, more care, more love. There are those who expect a political system to produce that, and others who expect the love to produce the system. My own faith is that the truth of the future lies between the two, and we shall behave humanly and a bit humanely, stumbling along, haphazardly generous and gallant, foolishly and meanly wise until the rape of our planet is seen to be the preposterous folly that it is.<sup>5</sup>

Golding is again talking about the truth of the future. But it is precisely his urgent plea for more love and more care and more humanity that emphasises the difficulty. Not that he is wrong in his insistence on these things, but does Golding expect the victims of Stalinism and Nazism, for instance, to show more humanity, more care, more love? Or does he ask political leaders to show these three things? In the first of these two cases, it would be unjust to ask the victims of horrible regimes to show more humanity towards their oppressors. In the second case, it is highly unlikely that political leaders, already ensconced in their posts, would show more humanity, more care, and more love without a revolution to convince them that they are the wrong rulers. No love, no humanity, and no care by a people towards their oppressors were able to change their political system. And we may feel no political government has changed overnight or even over a long period of time simply because the political leaders decided to show more care, more humanity and more love. The second reason as to why the account of doing right and wrong is a simplistic one concerns the righteousness of the right path itself. It is true that some people think that they follow the right path, but which of the following is the right path: "Turn the other cheek," or "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth?" Golding rightly insists that:

Our humanity rests in the capacity to make value judgments, unscientific assessments, the power to decide that this is right, that wrong, this ugly, that beautiful, this just, that unjust. Yet these are precisely the questions which "Science" is not qualified to answer with its measurement and analysis. They can be answered only by the methods of philosophy and the arts. We are confusing the immense power which the scientific method gives us with the all-important power to make the value judgments which are the purpose of human education.<sup>6</sup>

It is clear that Golding is involved in a moral question. But it is also clear that this moral question is political by nature. To take an historical example: it is now clear to the world, as it was instinctively clear to the ecclesiastical authorities at the time, that such thinkers as Bacon, Copernicus and Galileo were a threat to the political power of the church; yet the church was not able to show more love, more humanity and more care towards these scientists while claiming at the same time that it was the dispenser of mercy. The contradiction between the actual burning of man caused by the church during the Inquisition and the idea that the church helps to relieve man's suffering is very obvious.

The question of right and wrong is of course complicated. The religious solution to this quandary is to suggest that: "Perhaps those people who do good will be rewarded in heaven and those who do wrong will be punished in hell." But this "perhaps" involves us in speculations about the existence of heaven and hell in the first place. Moreover, wouldn't this "perhaps" imply that all people

should be "religious" and therefore prevented in an authoritarian way from being non-believers in heaven and hell?

My philosophical analysis is directly related not only to Golding's "methods of philosophy and the arts" but primarily to his novels in which he is engaged in showing us some of the ways of man's behaviour and their consequences. However, it is clear that what he concentrates on in his novels is man's darker side rather than his cheerful one. It is also clear that Golding is warning man against his selfishness and that if man insists on being selfish, he will never stand a chance of envisaging a better future. Moreover, Golding tells us in his autobiographical essays that he is confirmed in his belief that man is diseased by nature. One is able to conclude justly from this belief that he is prejudiced in his view of man's nature in the original sense of the word "prejudice", a derivative that comes from the Latin "pre-judare" which means to pre-judge. It is true that man perpetrated horrible crimes against his fellow man, something which gives credence to Golding's view. But it is also true, we know from Golding's own works, that man created a brilliant universe. The Egyptian pyramids, the spire of Salisbury Cathedral, and other huge monuments in Rome and Athens, the numerous true stories of man's courage and sympathy for his fellow man in times of need, all these things certainly testify to the possibility

that man is also a creator and not only a destroyer. Golding himself says that: "We have diminished the world of God and man in a universe ablaze with all the glories that contradict that diminution."<sup>7</sup> Not only does Golding explore the contradiction of creation and destruction; he also finds powerful images for it in his fiction in novel after novel. Man is capable not only of creation as we see in The Spire but also of destruction as we see in Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin. Man creates his world, yet it is man himself who diminishes it. How can man be both a creator and a destroyer? This question is at the heart of Golding's fiction. Man destroys man as in Lord of the Flies, and yet man rescues man again in Lord of the Flies. Man is glorified by building a spire and yet at the same time he is utterly destroyed by that same spire. Man is capable of exhibiting an inexhaustible fighting spirit which itself consumes that same man as in Pincher Martin. Man is totally averse to Established Religion which witnesses the celebration of that same man as is the case in the trilogy. Man is empty, yet it is that selfsame man who engages in speculations about emptiness as in The Paper Men. Man is the gentlest creature, yet it is that creature who is wiped out by the cruellest creature, man himself, as in The Inheritors.

Golding is immersed in these contradictions for two reasons. The first relates to his capacity of wonder:

A mental attitude to which both heredity and upbringing have made me prone is a sense of continual astonishment. At times I have felt this to be a matter for congratulation. Confirmation of that can be found in most elementary Greek schoolbooks where you will find the exemplary sentence "Wonder is the beginning of wisdom."<sup>8</sup>

The second reason is that Golding is already a potential believer in the justifiability of contradictions: "To me the contradictions of Egyptian beliefs were not implausible; or rather, since they were religious beliefs, contradictions were just what I had come to expect."<sup>9</sup> There is a clear connection between religious belief and contradiction. In another statement, Golding says: "I am, in fact, an Ancient Egyptian, with all their unreason, spiritual pragmatism and capacity for ambiguous and even contradictory belief."<sup>10</sup> The idea of contradiction is fundamental to Golding's mind. He is concerned with it in most of his novels, sometimes parading it on the surface, at other times, hiding it underneath a narrative which is unmistakably nervous. How then do we grope our way through these contradictions?

This study will treat of two different aspects of contradiction, one that revolves around Golding himself and another that is embedded in capitalist societies and reflected vividly in his fiction. Moreover, I will try to shed light on the relation between literature and real life in an attempt to show that the former is not merely a matter of fictional, imaginative escapades that have no

relation whatsoever to the latter. Literature is not only imaginative writing. A. Norman Jeffares, for instance, reminds us that:

The study of literature requires knowledge of contexts as well as of texts. What kind of person wrote the poem, the play, the novel, the essay? What forces acted upon them as they wrote? What was the historical, the political, the philosophical, the economic, the cultural background? Was the writer accepting or rejecting the literary conventions of the time, or developing them, or creating entirely new kinds of literary expression? Are there interactions between literature and the art, music or architecture of its period? Was the writer affected by contemporaries or isolated? Such questions stress the need for students to go beyond the reading of set texts, to extend their knowledge by developing a sense of chronology, of action and reaction, and of the varying relationships between writers and society.<sup>11</sup>

We need, of course, to know something about historical, political, philosophical, economic and cultural background. In this study, I will attempt to shed light on all these aspects while concentrating mainly on Golding's works. However, it will obviously be a self-defeating project if I only try to assess contradiction in Golding's fiction and stop at that. My purpose in undertaking this study is to show as I mentioned earlier how literature can be related to real life and how real life can be affected by literature. William Golding is a major, controversial writer. I will study the contradictions as his novels display them in the light of my understanding of the way in which literature is ideological in its nature and thus how literary ideology

might itself give us another clue to our behaviour in the future.

Let me then explain first the difference between Golding's contradiction and the contradictions of capitalism in general in his fiction by giving an example. Most, if not all, Western capitalist societies maintain that their prime concern is the particular individual and his own welfare. Yet, it is precisely that "particular" individual who suffers most from some of these societies' capitalist practices. The horrendous crimes perpetrated in such societies, the high unemployment figures in some of them, the filthy slums around some cities, the recurrent strikes and economic recessions which cripple their economies, the proliferation of nuclear arms which frightens these individuals out of their wits, all these things happen in capitalist societies and, it could be argued, originated in them. Not that third world and other countries are exempt from such horrendous crimes; but capitalist systems pride themselves on being democratic systems, and yet McCarthyism and the Ku Klux Klan, for instance, are not alien to these "democratic" systems. What is justifiably at stake here is the genuineness of the capitalist claims that their pride consists in their priorities, the individual and his welfare, ensconced in what they claim to be a democratic system. By the suffering of the individual, I do not mean that this individual might not have access to high

standards of living in terms of food, clothing and a place to live in although there are millions of people who are deprived in capitalist societies of these high standards. Rather, it is the spiritual suffering\_\_ and here I return to Golding's analysis\_\_ which is more likely to come to the forefront. It is the gradual loss of creativity which inflicts these societies creating, thereby, a very subtle contradiction. It is to this capitalist West that Golding addresses his complaint:

I began to understand then the deep need we feel for the sacrifice, for the creator rather than the critic. I came to the conclusion that this deep need accounts for the new trade of Writer in Residence\_\_ a trade in which a degree of eccentricity is accepted and even expected and in which some moral confusion is tolerated if not condoned. The truth is that in the West we fear the wells of creativity are running dry and we may be right. 12

Could it really be that this advanced West with all its knowledge of the sciences and arts of the world is running out of wells of creativity? Golding not only explores this fear but also attempts to remedy this gradual, frightening loss by injecting into the literature of the West his own swathes of literary imagination and creativity, in novels that are packed with imagination and yet riddled, purposefully, with all those contradictions that increasingly inflict themselves upon this unwary West. There is nothing closer in its imaging of these subtle contradictions than the emptiness described in The Paper Men. Not that Golding as a writer

is himself immune from contradiction, but as we shall soon see, his contradiction is of a different nature. Golding, after all, was born in the West.

The contradictions of the West appear, then, in Golding's fiction. What is the contradiction of what might be termed the futureless future in Lord of the Flies if not a condemnation of the impasse that the West, and to Golding man in general, has reached? What is it that makes a fighting, tenacious spirit like that of Pincher Martin lose the fight miserably amidst all the clear signs that Martin wants to hang on to life? And in The Spire, is it not another contradiction that makes a man reach the shores of desperation for the same reason that should propel him into the summits of hope? It is contradictions like these that permeate Golding's work. The sheer drama that is created upon reading his novels is unmistakable. To deal with an empty character such as Barclay, who himself dabbles in speculations about the emptiness of the world, is certainly to be amazed at the capacity of man to render man's own critical powers of interpretation paralyzed. But contradictions in Golding's fiction do not stop here. They take us further into his latest work, the trilogy, to plunge us into the extraordinary ambivalence of a character who is confirmed in his belief that the Established Religion is no go and yet celebrates his own marriage under the canopy of this same Established Religion. Thus, it is a long journey of contradictions

born in the aftermath of the Second World War in Britain to plough the high seas of the trilogy towards the Antipodes. Golding exports these contradictions to other lands and histories. However, this is not to be taken as a rejection of a problem but as a reminder that however far the land is and however distant the past becomes, these contradictions will not go away. Or will they?

To answer this question, it is incumbent upon us to search the historical, political, philosophical, economic and cultural background which Jeffares talks about for any indication that might tell us more about these contradictions and about the possibility or impossibility of their removal. Is it, for example, the natural order of things for a man to be destroyed by his own creation? Or might there be a situation where contradictions are resolved? There are two points to be dealt with in this context: Golding's desire to understand these contradictions and the method of investigation he employs to probe the heart of man in order to understand them. Golding certainly wants to understand these contradictions because he asks very urgently:

Let us return. What man is, whatever man is under the eye of heaven, that I burn to know and that\_\_ I do not say this lightly\_\_ I would endure knowing. The themes closest to my purpose, to my imagination have stemmed from that preoccupation, have been of such a sort that they might move me a little nearer that knowledge. <sup>139</sup>

But Golding has already told us that "we have diminished the world of God and man in a universe ablaze with all the glories that contradict that diminution." Thus we can assume that Golding knows that man is a destroyer. But he also mentions the glories, something which stands against that very knowledge. Man is suddenly capable of appearing as a creator. What Golding is burning to know, therefore, can be seen as precisely the contradictory nature of man. It is Golding's burning desire that creates his fictions, adventures in what is very clearly a field of contradictions. But Golding does not deal decisively with these contradictions although he is always engaged in dramatizing them. That Golding comes to no eventual resolution of the nature of these contradictions is very obvious from what he himself hands down to us in the field of mysteries:

For below what we are told is the purer vision, perception, of the saint there lies that curious region of the occult, of psychokinesis, extrasensory perception, second-sight; a region endlessly debated, fruitlessly investigated, and coming down at the end it seems, to a matter of individual opinion. Below that area again are there not in us all, hints and \_\_ not flashes\_\_ but sometimes sparks of the inexplicable, fleeting suggestions that of all things the human mind, its whole volume of mentation still remains the mystery of mysteries?<sup>14</sup>

Why does Golding burn to know what man is while at the same time he reminds us that the human mind remains the mystery of mysteries? We begin to see now how the threads of contradiction are woven together in Golding's cosmic

optimism and universal pessimism, his burning desire to know what man is, yet his conviction that the human mind remains the mystery of mysteries, his complete desire to preserve the glories of man, yet his confirmed belief that man diminishes these glories. And yet another contradiction emerges from behind these: for Golding believes that man is afflicted with Original Sin. In an interview held in 1989, he accepted the following as an accurate definition of the original sin: "An innate inability to live as some animals live, apparently in perfect harmony, or an innate inability for living in a satisfactory state in society."<sup>15</sup> Yet Golding demands that:

We must produce *homo moralis*, the human being who cannot kill his own kind, nor exploit them nor rob them. Then no one will need to write utopias, satires or antiutopias for we shall be inhabitants of utopia as long as we can stay on the bicycle; and perhaps a little \_\_ not much, but a little\_\_ dull.<sup>16</sup>

Golding demands unequivocally that we produce *homo moralis* while he is convinced that man has an innate inability for living in a satisfactory state in society. He is asking us to produce the human being who cannot kill his own kind while he tells us that man can produce evil as a bee produces honey. Is Golding, then, convinced that *homo moralis* can be produced? We will certainly fall into a terrible dilemma the moment we answer positively, because our answer will then wipe out Golding's universal

pessimism. Golding will not be seen as a universal pessimist at all if he believes in the possibility of producing *homo moralis*, a human being that seems to be almost perfect. But Golding himself admitted not earlier on in his literary career but as late as 1983 that he is a universal pessimist. But let us believe with Golding for the moment that *homo moralis* can be produced (for he says we must produce him) and let us assume that Golding is confirmed in his belief that a human being who cannot kill his own kind, nor exploit them nor rob them can exist. Would not this desire on Golding's behalf justify a belief that he is a utopian? Yet Golding declares:

The Marxist is quite right to insist on the *how* of Utopia even if he is hazy about the what and when. Utopians, with their pretty pictures, their indifference to the fact of human nature and their assumption that even in a book it is possible to ignore the Heraclitean flux of things, are a feckless if good-humoured lot.<sup>17</sup>

By a "feckless lot", Golding presumably means a feeble, weak, ineffectual and irresponsible lot. How can Golding then insist on producing *homo moralis* so that we can be inhabitants of Utopia? Amidst all these contradictory positions, a religious hymn shimmers into being. And it is Golding again who recognizes the significance of this religious hymn:

God works in a mysterious way, says the hymn; and so, it seems, does the devil\_\_\_ or since that word is unfashionable I had better be democratic and call him the leader of the opposition.... The bare act of being

is an outrageous improbability. Indeed and indeed I wonder at it.<sup>18</sup>

Taking refuge in the mysterious ways of God, then, is one way of resolving all contradictions. Man can be at once a creator and a destroyer, an optimist and a pessimist. It also enables shifts of judgement about the future of humanity without commitment, since it is possible that man can have a better future and at the same time that he can "create" for himself a worse future. It is precisely this possibility of two contradictory futures that Golding is talking about in his only contribution to political thought:

As a diagnosed and perhaps condemned antiutopian I offer you the distilled wisdom of fifty years. It is my only contribution to political thought and it could be inscribed on a large postage stamp. It is simply this. With bad people, hating, unco-operative, selfish people, no social system will work. With good people, loving, co-operative, unselfish people, any social system will work.<sup>19</sup>

But it certainly must be distressing for Golding and for us too to have to treat our whole future as a hazardous guess in which we stumble along, haphazardly generous and gallant, foolishly and meanly wise until the rape of our planet is seen to be the preposterous folly that it is. If that is really how we are going to stumble along, then what is wrong with what we have got now, and why should we complain at all? And what if at the end of all this we do not see the rape of our planet for the

preposterous folly that it is? But a more important question presents itself to us: "Is Golding really happy with the status quo?" The answer is certainly no. Golding knows exactly what he is raging against. We have already seen him complain about the loss of the wells of creativity in the West. It is the spiritual loss that Golding does not want to see happening. Time and again, Golding stresses the fact that: "The spiritual is to the material, three times real!" And as if this statement was not enough to convince people, Golding goes on to tell them in his Nobel lecture about a real story, a story in which Golding grieves for nothing less than the loss of life itself:

This was on the west coast of our country.... There was a particular phase of the moon at which the tide sank more than usually far down and revealed to me a small recess which I remember as a cavern. There was plenty of life of one sort or another round all the rocks and in the pools among them. But this pool, farthest down and revealed, it seemed, by an influence from the sky only once or twice during times when I had the holiday privilege of living near it, this last recess before the even more mysterious deep sea, had strange inhabitants which I had found nowhere else.... I have been back since. The recess\_\_ for now it seems no more than that\_\_ is still there, and at low-water springs, if you can bend down far enough, you can still look inside. Nothing lives there any more. It is all very clean now, ironically so\_\_ clean sand, clean water, clean rock. Where the living creatures once clung they have worn two holes like the orbits of eyes, so that you might well sentimentalize yourself into the fancy that you are looking at a skull. No life.<sup>20</sup>

The upshot of the argument could not have been expressed better. It is precisely the irony of cleanness

which stands out in this passage. If the West is becoming "cleaner" at the expense of life itself, then the bargain is certainly a bad one. It is precisely the lost spirit, the vanished creatures, which Golding wants to inject back into the bodies of his characters. This brings us back to the self-contradictory position of simultaneous pessimism and optimism. Almost all Golding's novels give us the feeling of an unfinished job. In Lord of the Flies Jack is left where he started, a boy who is not punished for all the destruction he does on the island. In Free Fall Rowena Pringle is almost forgiven for all the psychological torture that she inflicts on the little, helpless Mountjoy. Mountjoy himself is thrust into a mood of meditation which takes us away from the "real" harm inflicted on Beatrice. In The Spire, Dean Jocelin dies hallucinating about the whereabouts of God while Pangall lies dead as part of the physical foundation of the spire itself. Even Pincher Martin's death is shown as a punishment for rejecting the technique of dying into heaven rather than as a just settlement for the injury he inflicts on the other characters. The whole argument of the novel would have collapsed if what the novel itself demanded was achieved, namely, if Martin had acquiesced and accepted Nathaniel's advice to learn the technique of dying into heaven. After the vivid social drama of injustices committed by Martin for what are obviously psychosocial reasons and deprivations in a society

enmeshed in war, all that is demanded is that Martin acquiesce and understand that all this greed is getting him nowhere. Thus it is abundantly clear that what Golding starts with as a vivid portrayal of capitalist, bourgeois contradictions ends up as a religious plea to change ourselves so that we stop being greedy and evil. The disgusting, horrible war which causes the evacuation of the boys in the first place is supplanted by another religious idea about the evil nature of man embodied in Jack. At the end of Lord of the Flies, we do not know what to think of the war which is being fought in the wider world. It is this shift from the political scene to the religious arena that makes Golding ambivalent in his dealings with the future. For Golding, evil is not generated politically but religiously, as it were. Evil lurks in the heart of man. But then goodness lurks there too. What we end up with is a continuous process of wishful thinking and hoping against hope. We end up in a situation where the future is left on its own waiting for the lucky day when man realizes that he is really evil and thereby transcends this state. This is why Golding is at once pessimistic and optimistic. If both good and evil exist in man potentially, is it any good trying to predict which side will win? Moreover, both good and evil people are God's creatures. And Golding makes it absolutely clear that he believes in God:

Of man and God. We have come to it, have we not? I believe in God; and you may think to yourselves\_\_here is a man who has left a procession and gone off by himself only to end with another gas-filled image he tows round with him at the end of a rope. You would be right of course. I suffer those varying levels or intensities of belief which are, it seems, the human condition.<sup>21</sup>

Yet this God is not likely to save us from present or future social injustice. To take an example from Lord of the Flies, the crimes perpetrated against Piggy and Simon are not paid for although it is clear that Jack and Roger are behind it all. In Free Fall, Mountjoy gets away with what amounts to a crime by consigning Beatrice to the loony bin. In The Spire, Pangall specifically tells Dean Jocelin that his life is in danger and that he will be killed, yet we do not see in the course of the novel any particular attention given to Pangall by Jocelin. In The Paper Men, it is abundantly clear that Tucker who comes out of the blue to write a biography of Barclay is the cause behind his ultimate death, yet Tucker remains alive bemoaning his bad luck. Why do all these characters get away with what they do in these novels, especially when it turns out after all that there are "real" causes behind these "real" crimes? Golding calls himself a realist: "What I am is a realist"<sup>22</sup>, and in one sense he is clearly right. What novelist could bring to us a more realistic picture of reality, a reality that reflects to us a capitalist society rooted in contradictions? Golding's own contradiction, however, works against the

possibility of revelation in the sense that Golding is unwilling to see the contradictions in his novels for what they really are, namely, political contradictions of a very particular nature which can be analysed and superseded. As for Golding's own contradictions, they are very clearly "universal" ones caused by idealist abstraction but ones that can also be superseded. It is therefore paradoxical that the humanism in Golding is in exact proportion to the presence of contradictions in his novels. The more humanist Golding becomes, the more these resolvable, capitalist contradictions flourish in his fiction, and the less his rage prevails. Golding's rage against these contradictions is at once increased by his humanism and decreased by that same humanism. He tells us very candidly that:

I am subject to rages. They are not always explosive. They are sometimes what in a splendid phrase the Americans call "a slow burn". They are rages of a particular quality and set against particular circumstances. From Aristotle onwards—even from Hecataeus and Herodotus—the glum intellect of man has succeeded in constructing bolts and bars, fetters, locks and chains. In a world of enchantment that glum intellect has nothing to say of the fairy prince and the sleeping beauty but much to say of the tower and the dungeon. We have had great benefits from that same intellect but are having to pay for them. I say we have erected cages of iron bars; and ape-like I seize those bars and shake them with a helpless fury. :23

The contradiction in this passage between the benefits and the bolts and bars is characteristic of the problem of idealist abstraction. It is highly unlikely

that the same intellect which benefits us a great deal, say the intellect of Copernicus, would itself succeed in constructing fetters, locks and chains. The intellect that frees us from our enslavement to nature, for instance, is hardly the same intellect which would make us slaves to nature again. The intellect which would free us from superstitions is unlikely to bring us back into these superstitions again. The intellect which tells us, for example, that religion is the opium of people is hardly the same intellect which would chain us to religious beliefs. However, if these issues are difficult to resolve, what would be a better place than fairy tales and myths to resolve them? Golding insists that:

... the result of having your mind stocked with fairy tales as a child ... is to have a mind in some way liberated from obsession with the commonplace. Fairy tales are liberating. They pose us a paradox, a puzzle, a contradiction, and in the end they do not explain it so much as resolve it like discord. They are liberating; but on the other hand they are not liberal. You are not going to get the point of view of the poor, starving wolf, or the mentally defective giant.<sup>24</sup>

But although fairy tales are liberating, it is clear that they do have this disadvantage Golding mentions, the absence of the views of those who are clearly on the weaker side of the argument. As for myths, it is a fact that they are packed, like fairy tales, with courage, cowardice, truth, lies, hatred, compassion, paradoxes and puzzles, but above all, they are packed with and are, of

course, attempts precisely to resolve contradictions. These contradictions can be related particularly to the origin of gods. The immortality and the superhuman power of gods is not questioned, because the gods are precisely invoked as solutions to the problems of history. Werner Jaeger writes:

"Mythical" came to mean "unreal," and with this the world of poetry became an imaginary world. That is why the poetry of the ancients, their gods, and their heroes, were tolerated by Christianity: to them they had merely aesthetic significance; they were not true. But this devaluation of the myth had begun long before the Christian era. It was initiated by the Greeks themselves as soon as they replaced mythical tradition by their own experience, and imagination by reasoning.<sup>25</sup>

If we read the last sentence of this quotation carefully, we will understand one reason behind Golding's reluctance to take reasoning seriously. It is through reasoning that myths lose their mythical character. It is also through reasoning that one might turn into a Pincher Martin. But the contradiction lies in the alternative view that only through reasoning can we progress at all. Perhaps the best line of poetry to summarize this paradox is Eliot's "Only through time time is conquered." What is in the balance here is the dualism of mythology and history. Historically, we are born to die, whereas mythologically, there is the chance of snatching immortality from the jaws of death. Golding already demonstrates a desire for immortality in his

cosmic optimism: "Golding believes in human guilt and the human sense of paradise lost; he also believes in divine mercy."<sup>25</sup> In his article, "History and Myth in Yeats's "Easter 1916"", Eagleton provides us with one of the most intelligent observations about "painfully unresolved ambiguities":

Easter 1916 is, evidently enough, the creation of a myth: its aim is less to comment analytically on the dead rebels than to "write (them) out in a verse", so that what matters is the ritualising act of the art itself, defining its own limits and setting its own terms. In this sense, a refusal to pursue critical analysis which might undermine the myth can emerge as decorous\_\_ proper to the *genre*\_\_ rather than as cautiously evasive; Yeats can turn his own political reservations to poetic use, inserting qualifications which make their point but leave the elegiac balance undisturbed, since the death of the rebels has in any case rendered them irrelevant.<sup>27</sup>

These quotations help us to realize the precise ways in which reasoning and critical analysis are anathema to mythology. However, myth, in turn, can paralyse critical analysis with the powerful nature of its incorporations. As for Golding, he certainly prefers the appellation "myth maker" to "fabulist":

[W]hat I would regard as a tremendous compliment to myself ... would be if someone would substitute the word "myth" for "fable" ... I do feel fable as being an invented thing on the surface whereas myth is something which comes out from the roots of things in the ancient sense of being the key to existence, the whole meaning of life, and experience as a whole.<sup>28</sup>

From Golding's first quotation in this study, with its emphasis on the selfknowledge which we get from history,

to a field of myths with its powerful drive towards mystification, we pass through different contradictions. We travel from a clear-headed concentration on the problems of the West and the fear that the wells of creativity are running dry to an arena where, without care, mystification may rule supreme. On the one hand, Golding is a great believer in the historical chain of circumstances and social and political history:

In other respects [Professor Fussell] makes some astonishing statements of the simplistic sort that will not do in a book with these pretensions. For example, he declares "In the Great War, eight million people were destroyed because two persons, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand and his consort, had been shot." That is a bit of nonsense. It is a raucous shout, fitter for the hustings. He prises the Great War loose from the historical chain of circumstances and gives it a look over in isolation as though political and social history were no more than a framework which can be ignored unless useful as a support for a literary discussion.<sup>29</sup>

On the other hand, Golding tells us that:

I claim the privilege of the story-teller; which is to be mystifying, inconsistent, impenetrable and anything else he pleases provided he fulfils the prime clause in his unwritten contract and keeps the attention of his audience. This I appear to have done, and it is enough for me.<sup>30</sup>

There are specific reasons why Golding feels he should be both of these things. Having already seen that the West might be running out of its wells of creativity, and having realized that the ratio of cleanness and life is disproportionate, Golding hastens to revive the field of

mythology fusing the grand themes of life together. Although he has particular names for his characters, Golding still looks forward to creating a special cosmology of moral principles. Pincher Martin is greedy; Nathaniel is saintly; Simon is wise; Ralph is democratic; Piggy is a rational human being; Jocelin is a great fool; Jack is evil; and so on. From the most realistic picture of capitalist contradictions, we move on to a society of evil and good. It is only in the trilogy that Golding steers out of this grand cosmology into a drama of properly differentiated human emotions. Not that the other novels have no such "real" drama, but it is clear that we are verging on moral absolutism. We are faced, for example, with the problem of greed in Pincher Martin. In Darkness Visible, we are invited to penetrate the heart of good and evil. But the contradictions which Golding charts so vividly in his fiction make it difficult for him to bring us a distilled wisdom. Golding himself admits that: "Here is no sage to bring you a distilled wisdom. Here is an ageing novelist, floundering in all the complexities of twentieth century living, all the muddle of part beliefs."<sup>31</sup>

And complexities they certainly are. It is neither our duty nor is it our right to ask Golding to be crystal clear about his own beliefs in his fiction. It is clear from what we have seen earlier that Golding's novels are about capitalist contradictions, but it is also clear

that his generosity of heart works in a different arena. Golding's humanism is definitely a liberal humanism. In all his novels, Golding shows us how life is complex; but I believe he also indicates, perhaps unconsciously, a way towards a more radical humanism, one that is political rather than religious. My criticism in the following chapters may be seen as political. I would like to emphasize that this study is about the politics of literature and not about the literature of politics. It is the political and ideological elements in Golding's literary landscapes that I will be focusing on. Golding's novels are full of metaphors: the metaphor of the island in Lord of the Flies; the metaphor of the sea and the unconscious in Pincher Martin; the metaphor of the tower in The Spire; the metaphor of the ship as a whole society in the trilogy and so on. Golding is fond of metaphors because he believes that: "Always the truth is metaphorical."<sup>32</sup> However, since my study is in contradictions, it is driven almost inexorably towards ideology and politics, yet we need to see this always through the lens of metaphor.

In the remainder of this introductory chapter, I shall attempt to give a brief account of the social background as well as an account of the course of a literary career that is still with us today. Norman Page writes of this career: "... variety and unpredictability have been notable features of Golding's career as a novelist."<sup>33</sup>

Excluding the three stories under the title The Scorpion God, Golding's total output to date contains eleven novels, two books of essays, one travel book, one play, and a slim volume of poems.

William Gerald Golding was born in Cornwall on 19 September 1911, one of two sons born to Alec Golding, who became Senior Master at Malborough Grammar School, and his wife, Mildred, an active worker for women's suffrage. He had no sisters. In "Billy the Kid", where he gives an account of the first day Lily, his nurse, took him to school, Golding writes:

No one had suggested, before this time, that anything mattered outside myself. I was used to being adored, for I was an attractive child in an Anglo-Saxon sort of way. Indeed, my mother, in her rare moments of lyricism, would declare that I had "eyes like cornflowers and hair like a field of ripe corn". I had known no one outside my own family\_\_ nothing but walks with Lily or my parents, and long holidays by a Cornish sea. I had read much for my age but saw no point in figures. I had a passion for words in themselves, and collected them like stamps or birds' eggs. I had also a clear picture of what school was to bring me. It was to bring me fights. I lacked opposition, and yearned to be victorious. Achilles, Lancelot and Aeneas should have given me a sense of human nobility but they gave me instead a desire to be a successful bruiser.<sup>34</sup>

It is important to bear in mind the likelihood that Golding enters and is later obsessed with the world of mythology most probably because he finds himself in isolation: "I had known no one outside my own family." This feeling of isolation is also clearly responsible for the distant places in which Golding thrusts his

characters. The feelings of alienation and estrangement and the related consequence of contemplation are intense in Golding's novels, particularly with the protagonists. Even when the setting is England, Golding goes further back in history to an area where his imagination can work, as we see in The Spire. The settings of Lord of the Flies and Pincher Martin are two remote islands. The historical distance of The Spire and The Inheritors can be measured in centuries and millennia respectively. The feeling of alienation in Free Fall and The Paper Men is so intense that one of Wilfred Barclay's obsessions is the theme of homelessness.

To come back to the last sentence in the above quotation, Golding does become a literary bruiser. Critics have sometimes felt that when one reads his novels he is a bit heavy-handed in moralising issues. But perhaps it is those contradictions which were later funnelled into his fictions and which were felt on a small scale in his childhood that are the reason behind his heavy-handedness. In "The Ladder and the Tree", Golding expresses his exasperation at the social ranking of people. It is perhaps the first hint at the contradictions of the society of his day that we encounter in this article:

.... My father was a master at the local grammar school so that we were all the poorer for our respectability[.] In the dreadful English scheme of things at that time, a scheme which so accepted social snobbery as to elevate it to an instinct, we had our

subtle place. Those unbelievable gradations ensured that though my parents could not afford to send my brother and me to a public school, we should nevertheless go to a grammar school. Moreover we must not go first to an elementary school but to a dame school where the children were nicer though the education was not so good. In fact, like everybody except the very high and the very low in those days, we walked a social tightrope, could not mix with the riotous children who made such a noise and played such wonderful games on the Green. I did not question these contradictions.<sup>35</sup>

In other articles, however, Golding seems to be equipped with a radical spirit. In "Crosses", Golding counts some of his irritants: "My first and perhaps my major irritant is the barber. Until I reached the age of ten or thereabouts, my father or my mother cut my hair. This was the result of comparative poverty, and of some indifference to convention."<sup>36</sup> As we notice from this statement, indifference to convention does not start with Golding but it runs in his family too. Another irritant for Golding is clothes: "Why am I decent only when half strangled? For though they are a subtler irritant, clothes are another daily cross for me."<sup>37</sup> But Golding hastens to tell us why he thinks clothes are an irritant:

But today we all wear the same uniform, the same livery of servitude to convention. Youth has not its grace, nor age its privilege. An old man exhibits his infirmities in the same clothes that do nothing but hide the graces of his grandson. We have lost both ways.<sup>38</sup>

This irritant of clothes is, of course, not to be taken literally. Through it, Golding is attacking convention. Time and again, he stresses the fact that:

Until man is free of this drab convention and can dress as he likes, and habitually does so dress from one end of life to the other, we shall continue to button and zip and strap ourselves into a structure not much more becoming than a concrete wall, and about as comfortable.<sup>39</sup>

But more significant than all these crosses is the last one which Golding takes seriously: "For a cross, all this is perhaps too frivolous. Consider one that is more serious: the inability to write poetry."<sup>40</sup> Nowhere can imagination flow wantonly as in poetry and nowhere can paradoxes be found woven successfully together as in the texture of a poem. However, Golding's attempt to write poetry and feel free from this serious cross never achieved fruition. In fact, Golding started his literary career writing poetry. He was 23 when he published his volume of poetry containing 29 poems: "I was\_\_and now I feel a faint, middle-aged blush at the thought of it\_\_competing with Keats and Shelley, Wordsworth and Coleridge."<sup>41</sup> Although Golding composed his verses in the early thirties, he was not immersed in the social and political whirl as his contemporaries were. Cecil W. Davies writes of Golding's poetry: "It is not typical of the poetry of young men in the early nineteen-thirties, and when reading the Golding volume it is a shock to

realize that Auden is four years his senior."<sup>42</sup> But although Golding was disengaged from social questions in his poetry, he tells us that he developed a different outlook later on. In his article "My First Book" written in 1981, he tells us how:

I was conscious that I said nothing but was uneasily preoccupied with how I said it. Now this was particularly difficult at a time when\_\_whether the word was current or not\_\_a poet was supposed to be closely "engaged" to social questions. I was quite disengaged, bar a very mild feeling which I got from my parents that the Labour Party was Our Side. I lacked the generosity of spirit that would give all\_\_not merely life but writing too!\_\_for the betterment of mankind. I was stuck with the unit. Even to think of getting the two words apart for alternative use in the same poem created in me a sympathetic muscular tension as if I were using chest developers. Indeed, to tear them apart would have violated the only thing I had. What was lacking in me\_\_though I may have developed it later\_\_was a certain mobility of outlook, the power to walk round the back and see the thing from the other side, to walk away from and see it in relation to what was all around.... I have always been a curious mixture of conservative and anarchist. Translated into an attitude towards verse-making, this means either being content with a minimal result or destroying the thing petulantly.<sup>43</sup>

It is not difficult to detect the mixture of conservatism and anarchism in Golding's fiction. This attitude is clearly responsible for obscuring the true nature of the contradictions in his work, especially in relation to his characterisation. Being content with a minimal result or wanting to destroy the thing petulantly is something which is noticeable in Golding's fiction in general but more particularly in his Pincher Martin. But

Golding who was quite disengaged in his early life is clearly not the same Golding who stated that: "The theme of Lord of the Flies is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief, grief."<sup>44</sup> There is a noticeable transformation from the poet who lacked the generosity of spirit to the serious novelist who is never tired of repeating that the spiritual is to the material three times real. However, it would be untrue to say that Golding's novels do not have their own poetry. The exuberance of the metaphorical language (one can argue that all language is metaphorical by nature) in his fiction is unmistakable. In The Paper Men, Barcaly specifically concerns himself with the metaphoricity of language. But from the early 1930s to the writing of Lord of the Flies, that is, from the time when Golding was stuck with the unit to the time when he wanted to show what mess the boys would make, there is certainly a "long" history of political oppression and a war of attrition concerning the human spirit itself. The reality of this period is described by Jameson in his Marxism and Form: Twentieth-Century Dialectical Theories of Literature:

The reality with which the Marxist criticism of the 1930s had to deal was that of a simpler Europe and America, which no longer exist. Such a world had more in common with the life forms of earlier centuries than it does with our own. To say that it was simpler is by no means to claim that it was easier as well: on the contrary! It was a world in which social conflict was sharpened and more clearly visible, a world which projected a tangible model of the antagonism of the various classes toward each other, both within the individual nation-states and on the international

scene as well\_\_a model as stark as the Popular Front or the Spanish Civil War, where people were called on to take sides and to die, which are, after all, always the most difficult things.<sup>45</sup>

I will analyse eight novels from Golding's works in six chapters. The last chapter will deal with Golding's trilogy: Rites of Passage, Close Quarters, and Fire Down Below. As for the other five chapters, they will treat of individual novels. The titles of all the chapters will give a general indication of the major contradiction explored in those novels.

## NOTES

1. Quoted by Susan Sontag in Walter Benjamin, One-Way Street and Other Writings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), p. 21.
2. William Golding, The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 91.
3. William Golding, A Moving Target (1982; rpt. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), pp. 203-204.
4. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 126.
5. Golding, A Moving Target, pp. 212-13.
6. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 130.
7. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 192.
8. Ibid., pp. 198-99.
9. William Golding, An Egyptian Journal (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1985), p. 10.
10. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 55.
11. See Roderick Watson, The Literature of Scotland (London: Macmillan Educational, 1984), p. xi.
12. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 156.
13. Ibid., p. 199.
14. Ibid., p. 144.
15. Golding's statement in an interview with Nigel Forde (30 March 1989, Radio 4).
16. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 184.
17. Ibid., p. 177.
18. Ibid., p. 198.
19. Ibid., p. 184.
20. Ibid., pp. 210-11.
21. Ibid., p. 192.
22. Golding's statement in an interview with Nigel Forde.

23. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 186.
24. Ibid., p. 97.
25. Werner Jaeger in Gustav Schwab, Gods & Heroes: Myths and Epics of Ancient Greece (1947; rpt. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1950), p. 20.
26. Frank Kermode, Puzzles and Epiphanies: Essays and Reviews 1958-1961, Second Impression (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1963), p. 202.
27. Terry Eagleton, "History and Myth in Yeats's 'Easter 1916'," Essays in Criticism, 21, No. 3 (July 1971), 249.
28. Quoted by Kermode, p. 201.
29. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 100.
30. Ibid., p. 202.
31. Ibid., p. 192.
32. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 85.
33. Norman Page, "Introduction," in William Golding: Novels, 1954-67, ed. Norman Page (London: Macmillan, 1985), pp. 12-13.
34. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 159.
35. Ibid., pp. 167-68.
36. Ibid., pp. 21-22.
37. Ibid., p. 24.
38. Ibid., p. 25.
39. Ibid., p. 26.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid., p. 27.
42. Cecil W. Davies, "The Novels Foreshadowed: Some Recurring Themes in Early Poems by William Golding," English, 17 (1968), 86.
43. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 149.
44. Ibid., p. 163.

45. Fredric Jameson, Marxism and Form (New Jersey: Princeton, 1971), p. xvii.

## Chapter Two

### Lord of the Flies: The Futureless Future

"As far as "literature" goes, political is as political does: novels are political as much by virtue of their effects as by their themes, and the former cannot be "read off" from the latter. Lord of the Flies almost certainly does as much damage among English "A" level students as Animal Farm."<sup>1</sup>

(Terry Eagleton)

"... any contradiction is likely to have some sensible interpretations; and if you think of interpretations which are not sensible, it puts the blame on you."<sup>2</sup>

(William Empson)

Lord of the Flies is Golding's first novel, published in 1954. In this novel as well as all his other fictions, ideological implications concerning the place of the subject within a "structured" society are clearly foregrounded with great emphasis on the displacement which this subject is shown to undergo. Golding's view of his "fictional" events and characters in this book "reflects" his disappointed view of the real world in the 1940's in particular and his view of human nature in general. Lord of the Flies was also "occasioned" partly by the reaction against the "unrealistic" morality of The Coral Island which was published in 1858. This kind of "anxious Oedipal rivalry with a castrating, precursor"<sup>3</sup> novel that belongs to a different historical period does constitute an illusion of transhistorical themes, although a useful one

for my argument later on about the repression of history and the creation of an "intertextuality" which tries hopelessly to cut itself loose from historical determinants. We shall see later that this rivalry in positing a different, pessimistic vision of the world is not really as ideologically innocent as it might appear at first glance but rather specifically determined in a historical period when any optimism whatsoever would have sounded an outrageous lie. Golding's pessimism is not peculiar to him but rather shared by many who witnessed the two world wars in the first half of the twentieth century. However, the problem is not primarily one of being optimistic or pessimistic, but whether we can understand the fact that the natural home of both pessimism and optimism is necessarily the determinant historical conditions. Golding deliberately, however, alienates himself from these conditions and provides us with his own account of what Lord of the Flies is really about:

The boys find an earthly paradise, a world, in fact like our world, of boundless wealth, beauty and resource. The boys were below the age of overt sex, for I did not want to complicate the issue with that relative triviality. They did not have to fight for survival, for I did not want a Marxist exegesis. If disaster came, it was not to come through the exploitation of one class by another. It was to rise, simply and solely out of the nature of the brute. The overall picture was to be the tragic lesson that the English have had to learn over a period of one hundred years; that one lot of people is inherently like any other lot of people; and that the only enemy of man is inside him.<sup>4</sup>

In this quotation, Golding talks about a period of one hundred years over which the English have had to learn about the inherent nature of human beings. It is obvious that Golding is inclined towards the concept of stasis rather than change. If it took the English a whole century to learn something which was there a hundred years ago and something which they should understand now, then apparently this thing is still there. Golding incessantly talks about the diseased, fallen nature of man: "I decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys instead of paper cutouts with no life in them; and try to show how the shape of the society they evolved would be conditioned by their diseased, their fallen nature."<sup>5</sup> Golding does not believe that Ballantyne's optimism is justified. The hundred years which he talks about could only be the difference in time between the two novels which is exactly 96 years: "Ballantyne's island was a nineteenth-century island inhabited by English boys; mine was to be a twentieth-century island inhabited by English boys."<sup>6</sup> Golding's vision of the world is both mystical and religious. This is precisely why he is inclined more towards the concept of stasis than towards that of change.

Golding already told us that he would exclude the exploitation of one class by another with its implicit notion of class struggle as a reason for the disaster on

the island in Lord of the Flies. He tells us that the disaster would rise, simply and solely, out of the nature of the brute. Golding emphasises that: "Man is a fallen being. He is gripped by original sin. His nature is sinful and his state perilous."7 However, Golding's actual narrative in Lord of the Flies creates an interesting paradox about change and stasis. Although Golding insists that the exploitation of one class by another is to be excluded, it is obvious enough that what happens is almost a true portrayal of class struggle, a struggle between the oppressed and the oppressor. The outcome in Lord of the Flies is a genuine portrayal of capitalist contradictions with all their complexities.

In this chapter, I will attempt to analyse these contradictions in detail. The major contradiction in the novel involves the future of man, a future which seems to disappear before it even appears. In his attempt to show how evil man can be, Golding excludes women or girls from the novel, something which constitutes another component of frustration since women might be the sign of hope for a better, different world. Or are women to be treated under the rubric of man, namely, as evil human beings? We will see later on how capitalist contradictions have been transformed into what one might call "universal" contradictions, from those that are compounded by the actions of particular capitalist practices to those that all humanity shares in. That is why the future of all

humanity is blocked if all humanity is guilty. Golding makes it clear that: "The protagonist was Ralph, the average, rather more than average, man of goodwill and commonsense; the man who makes mistakes because he simply does not understand at first the nature of the disease from which they all suffer."<sup>20</sup> (italics are mine) In my analysis of the different contradictions in the book, I will touch on many points that are important such as the place of women in society, the issue of recognition, and the presence of many ambiguities that are generated because of a hidden contradiction. I will also refer to the familial relationship between Golding and his father in an attempt to show that traces of this relationship can be said to be lingering in the text in the characters of Piggy and Ralph. The significance of that lies in that Golding's father was inclined towards science while Golding is inclined towards religion. This inclination on Golding's part will create a contradiction particularly in relation to the rational explanation of the messages which he conveys in his fictions.

Golding's main problem in Lord of the Flies is related to his inclination towards religion. To put it differently, a metaphysical world is hinted at in the novel while all the signs indicate only the presence of a material world. If one is to be recognised as a religious writer, as Golding certainly is, then one should agree, at least implicitly, that the religious paraphernalia should

necessarily go with religion. The passionate belief in God necessarily means that one accepts that beside this supernatural being other supernatural beings, such as ghosts, exist too. If this is the case, then one should expect that the ghost, the beast which is supposed to frighten the children in Lord of the Flies, should, or at least, can exist. But it turns out unambiguously that the ghost is the dead pilot's body. In other words, what is stressed in this novel is the materiality of things rather than their metaphysicality. But against the grain of this materiality which is already shown in the novel, Golding has Simon "realise" that the beast is inside us:

"Fancy thinking the Beast was something you could hunt and kill!" said the head. For a moment or two the forest and all the other dimly appreciated places echoed with the parody of laughter. "You knew, didn't you? I'm part of you? Close, close, close! I'm the reason why it's no go? Why things are what they are?"  
(p. 158)

Two things must be pointed out before we can proceed with the analysis of this important passage, namely, the speaker and the fictionality of this fictional piece. It is obvious that the speaker is Golding himself rather than the head. We are encouraged to take this view because we already know that there is nobody else around Simon in this incident. Secondly, Simon is not able to tell the other boys about his encounter with the head. It is only the reader who knows about it. Ultimately, it is only the writer, in the guise of the narrator, who could be

speaking directly to his reader. We have in this passage a very important message, something which brings us to the second point about fictionality. This event can be fictional only in the sense that it never took place in real life. But it can only go this far. Ultimately, we are required to believe in the reality of the message rather than its fictionality.

What we are up against is Golding's philosophy itself. Golding obviously believes that the beast is something which the boys cannot hunt and kill. But it is precisely this impossibility of hunting and killing the beast, the evil inside us, which weakens the argument of the novel itself. We are brought into a deadlock. What, for instance, do we do about the beast? Is it knowable in terms which enable us to get rid of it? And what are these terms? We are totally disarmed in the face of this beast which is part of us and which cannot be hunted and killed. This passage provides us with an example of how Golding weaves his own messages into the skein of action in his novels. And it is this subtle intrusiveness which allows us to involve Golding the man in our criticism of Golding the writer. Golding's ideology is certainly blended in his fiction. We have "heard" Golding in the first chapter claim the privilege to be mystifying, inconsistent, and impenetrable. There are two different points to be considered here. If Golding is talking, as he seems to be doing, about story-telling, then he is absolutely entitled

to anything which pleases him and enables him to tell an interesting story. But if it is Golding the philosopher that we should be listening to in his novels in such passages, then it is we surely who are entitled to ask for clarity of vision. It was in an article entitled "Fable" that Golding talked about Lord of the Flies and it was the same article in which he said: "The fabulist is a moralist. He cannot make a story without a human lesson tucked away in it."<sup>2</sup>

It is very obvious from Golding's fiction that he wants to give us a human lesson. But it is also obvious that there is a clash between the clarity of the human lesson and the mystery of the story which makes it a story in the first place. In Golding's fiction in general and in Lord of the Flies in particular, there is a confusion and interpenetration between these two tasks. What Golding wants to do in the novel is to show us that man can be evil. He does that by making Jack commit evil deeds. But Golding does not say anything about the material reasons as to why Jack commits those deeds. It is not enough to claim that man is evil. It is clear to the reader that Piggy, Simon, Ralph, Sam and Eric are not representations of evil boys. They are on the same island, living in the same climate and eating almost the same food (fruit versus meat). Yet these characters do not exhibit the same evil as Jack and Roger do. Golding's dilemma becomes clear when we realize, then, that he is trying to tuck into his novel

two contradictory parameters, the rational explanation of the message and the "mystificatory" aspect of storytelling. It is this aspect of some kind of mystification in the writing that helps to obscure the nature of the capitalist contradictions which are "portrayed" in Lord of the Flies in a vivid and interesting narrative. And it is this same aspect which I shall explore to arrive at these contradictions.

In Lord of the Flies, these contradictions can be seen as both "contradictions of form" and "contradictions of content". But we will notice later on that the more carefully we look at these contradictions, the more easily the border between them will vanish. Contradictions of form will be those shown in the modes of description in the novel, mainly naturalist and "pastoral". William Golding has described himself as a realist, and his "psychological realism" is shown particularly in the dialogue which in Lord of the Flies is characterised by hiatuses and silences at the end of those dialogical sentences: "That's how you can feel in the forest. Of course there's nothing in it. Only\_\_\_Only\_\_\_" (p. 57) At times, there is a complete lack of communication between the characters:

"After I said I didn't want\_\_\_"

"What on earth are you talking about?" (p. 26)

On the other hand, contradictions of content will be those related to ideas or concepts such as the concepts of diachrony and synchrony. Another contradiction of this sort is the contradiction embodied in the bourgeois subjectivity itself in its ideological endeavour at once to appear on and disappear from the scene of events. This will be couched mostly in a contradiction of form in the way the narrator delivers the description of characters. It is the narrator himself (it is possible that Golding excluded women even at this level) who will represent the crisis of subjectivity.

The Jack, Ralph and Peterkin of Ballantyne's novel are replaced in Lord of the Flies by a trio which lays bare the foundation of a totally different vision. The symphony of love played by the first three is turned into "the darkness of man's heart". Ralph, the protagonist in the latter novel, is shown as displaced psychologically and socially in a society described "eidetically" in the engaging narrative of the novel. One of the most important aspects in Lord of the Flies is precisely Golding's use of his literary language to achieve certain effects particularly those relating to images of death and frustration.

The technique of Lord of the Flies lies partly in the systematic construction of certain symbolic elements which govern the story and partly in the narrative method whereby the invocation of a whole series of ambiguities is

made possible. I do not mean by "ambiguities" in this context "any verbal nuance ... which gives room for alternative reactions to the same piece of language,"<sup>10</sup> but rather the psychological uncertainties which govern the behaviour of some of the characters in this "fictional" social construct. The reader is "unfixed" when she gropes for the meaning behind Ralph's behaviour. There is no explicable code of behaviour, for instance, when Ralph thinks that Piggy is humiliated: "Stillness descended on them. Ralph, looking with more understanding at Piggy, saw that he was hurt and crushed. He hovered between the two courses of apology or further insult." (pp. 26-27) Although we are told that there is more understanding, there is still that "inevitable" oscillation between an apology or a further insult. I would like to emphasise the fact that in spite of some demerits in Golding's political philosophy, he is still a "master" in delineating certain psychological situations. This mastery is shown everywhere in his novels from the beginning to the end. I will argue later how this genre of psychological realism mostly observable in the dialogue in Lord of the Flies is imbricated with other genres in a way which exposes the contradictions in the novel more than it hides them. However, the problem we encounter is that Golding's psychological situations cannot be dialectically connected. The reason for this unconnectedness lies in Golding's idealism, although he states in one of his

recent interviews that "what I am is a realist."'' To put it simply, Golding succeeds on the "phenomenological" level, as it were, rather than on the dialectical one.

In "psychoanalysing" Ralph, there is a "disproportion" between the description of the "outer" self and the "inner" or "psychical" self. We notice in the following passage how the description resolves itself from exactitude into vagueness:

He [Ralph] was old enough, twelve years and a few months, to have lost the prominent tummy of childhood; and not yet old enough for adolescence to have made him awkward. You could see now that he might make a boxer, as far as width and heaviness of shoulders went, but there was a mildness about his mouth and eyes that proclaimed no devil. He patted the palm trunk softly; and, forced at last to believe in the reality of the island, laughed delightedly again and stood on his head. (p. 11, my italics)

We can easily notice the assertion that the mildness about Ralph's mouth "proclaimed no devil". We get this kind of assertive information from the description of Ralph's appearance. But when the narrator tries to go into the character's "mind", we are not told why Ralph "laughed delightedly" when he was forced to believe in the reality of the island. This attitude of withholding certain information from the reader predominantly characterises the narrative of Lord of the Flies. It is not the verbal nuance which gives room for alternative reactions since we already know that Ralph hovers between two attitudes. Rather the ambiguity lies in the "psychological" attitude

itself which is to my mind conditioned by its background ideology. One can venture two explanations for Ralph's behaviour. One of these explanations would imply, as we shall see, a certain contradiction. The first explanation which is more likely than the second is that at last Ralph finds a place where he could realise a dream about a democratic society in case other subjects prove to exist on this "paradisiacal" island. I say that this explanation is more likely because it would correspond to Golding's purpose in bringing these boys to the island in the first place and later on confronting them with the "impossibility" of achieving a democratic society. This would, of course, prove Golding's pessimistic attitude about human nature. However, I believe that what lies behind Ralph's delightedness is a narcissistic pleasure and that Golding, in his "simplistic" approach to this matter and his dismissal of fundamental Freudian explanations of the human psyche, is ineluctably forced to misunderstand the dialectics of desire although he depicts it excellently. I believe that Ralph's delightedness is not entirely "innocent". He is precisely a "product" of a certain ideology that would bask in "narcissistic identification" rather than admit the freedom or even the existence of difference. What would, otherwise, be the further intention to insult Piggy who is drastically incorporated and ultimately wiped out from the skein of action? However, the second explanation for the ambiguity

might be that Ralph finds himself in reality (notice the word "reality" in the text) free from the drab conditions at home. The contradiction in this case lies in the fact that Ralph plans from the outset for the rescue of the other boys and by implication intends to go back home. But this explanation is necessarily related to the first one, since it is the war which forces the boys to go out of England and therefore to dream of a real democratic society far away from the violent conditions at home. Thus the concept of "war" itself becomes the locus for contradictions. Is the war being waged against tyranny in the hope of restoring order, or is it a war that becomes later the cause of alienation and tyranny? In other words, is it a "holy" war or is it a "capitalistic" war?

Another example of ambiguity is provided in Jack's behaviour when Ralph is finally chosen as a chief: "The circle of boys broke into applause. Even the choir applauded; and the freckles on Jack's face disappeared under a blush of mortification. He started up, then changed his mind and sat down again while the air rang." (p. 24) A question is bound to be asked about the reason for the blush of mortification. Is it because Jack is humiliated by being left out or is it because this kind of democracy proves one way or another to be undemocratic, since Ralph is helped to that situation because he happens to be holding the "magical" conch? Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor clearly assert this point: "It is his

association with the shell rather than his size or attractiveness that makes the children choose Ralph as their leader..."<sup>12</sup> A second explanation could be ventured here, namely, the desire on the part of Jack's group to dissociate itself from what it sees as a potential tyrant. However, if this explanation is to be ventured, Golding's intention of creating an evil society in the purpose of proving his thesis would be unearthed as mechanically engendered. Thus through such ambiguities, the narrative will be shown to gain its vividness and power in keeping us alert to many "indefinable" expectations from the text. Not that it is ultimately difficult to decipher these ambiguities, but is it not true that these ambiguities are there in the first place precisely because of contradictions as we have seen in the first example?

However, the main contradiction in Lord of the Flies is created because of the complete separation which is imposed between two modes of thinking, the diachronic and the synchronic. The major conflict in the novel is between Ralph and Jack, who are the representatives of diachronic thinking and synchronic thinking respectively. To put it another way, Ralph represents the long-term thinking while Jack represents the short-term thinking. Golding certainly advocates the long-term thinking in an attempt to banish what he obviously considers to be the contingencies of the moment and to "establish" a way of thinking that could benefit humanity in the long run. This attempt is, of

course, admirable in itself. However, there is a problem in separating the long-term thinking from the short-term policies. What would happen five years from now would be happening today if we travelled five years in time. In other words, what is going to happen in the future is already happening one way or another in the present. To give an example from Lord of the Flies itself: what is "now" happening in the novel, namely, the killing and destruction on the island, is obviously the future for these boys before their evacuation from their homeland, England. It is in this sense that long-term thinking becomes short-term thinking. And it is precisely at this point that problems arise for Golding and for the children on the island. It is true that Golding sees through the short-term policies that Jack adopts. He is absolutely right in his attempt to avoid what are obviously some disabling, destructive consequences of Jack's behaviour. Jack is (totally?) blind to the "profitable" future which is beyond his sight anyway. But Golding cannot ignore practically the benefits of the "common-sensical" policies which this character seems to follow and which seem for a short time to appeal to the boys on the island. Jack seems to be particularly keen on "satisfying" the children by his insistence that they should eat meat rather than fruit. Whatever his "intentions" are in the novel, he still appeals to the children in the beginning and even Ralph and Piggy who seem reluctant to eat the meat hunted

by Jack share at the end in the "slap-up" meal. However, Golding rejects this kind of thinking because of what he sees as the dangers of the mechanism of pleasure and its manipulative power. Jack turns into an absolute tyrant. His seduction of the children through cooked meat has its own ideological implications:

Ralph dribbled. He meant to refuse meat but his past diet of fruit and nuts, with an odd crab or fish, gave him too little resistance. He accepted a piece of half-raw meat and gnawed it like a wolf. Piggy spoke, also dribbling.

"Aren't I having none?"

Jack had meant to leave him in doubt, as an assertion of power; but Piggy by advertising his omission made more cruelty necessary. (p. 80)

It is precisely this assertion of power that Golding is trying to pinpoint and "destroy". And it is precisely in passages like this one that Golding appears to be at his best as a psychoanalyst creating thereby the greatest paradox in his fiction. Golding who opens up the gates of psychological and political analysis so accurately in passages like these is the same Golding who skates perilously towards the religious arena only to obscure his own argument. But perhaps with some more critical investigation, this aspect in his work will be illuminated. Golding explains in "Fable" that: "It seemed to me that man's capacity for greed, his innate cruelty and selfishness was being hidden behind a kind of pair of political pants."<sup>13</sup> It is obvious, then, that Golding thinks that greed is really behind the political assertion

which he portrays so well in Jack. It is also obvious that whenever Golding is confronted with such political assertion he would classify it in an essentialist manner under the categories of greed, selfishness, and cruelty. But it is abundantly clear to the reader that Jack's "problem" is not exactly greed. He is willing to give meat to the other children under one condition, namely, that the boys surrender to him their own freedoms. It is true that Jack is cruel when he ties and beats some of the other children, but this is not exactly the "problem" either. If Golding insists on saying that man hides his capacity for greed, innate cruelty and selfishness behind a pair of political pants, then he would be defeating his own argument from Lord of the Flies itself. There is no reader who would really believe that Ralph is trying to hide his selfishness, innate cruelty and greed in the novel. Yet precisely at the moment when he is weeping for the end of innocence and the darkness of man's heart and for the loss of the wise friend, Ralph speaks loudly:

"Who's boss here?"

"I am," said Ralph loudly.

(p. 222)

It is impossible for the reader to believe that Ralph would hide his capacity for all these things so intelligently and stealthily until the end of the novel. Ralph's cry is a genuine cry. Otherwise, if Ralph, underneath those clothes of his, proves to be another

Jack, then, in O'Flinn's words, "we might as well pack away our socialist illusions, go home and pray."<sup>14</sup>

Why, then, is Golding inclined towards that religious arena? The answer to this question is likely to bring us all the way to the heart of the matter. If man's serious problems can be truly traced back to his greed, selfishness and innate cruelty, is there any easier way of reaching the shores of happiness and solving all those problems than to appeal to man in the most fervent fashion to get rid of these dreadful "sins"? Because of his fervent desire to change society and to see it in a happier condition, Golding hastens to show man that it is these things that are the reason why it's no go. And because Golding has already seen the miserable human condition and has been confirmed in his belief that it is highly unlikely that man will change, he hastens to brand these things as innate. Golding is a humanist writer, and it is his humanism that lies behind the paradox. He is capable of being at once a sharp observer of political, psychological movements and a humanist who is willing, because of his humanism, to forgive the evil doers. Why does Jack survive with all his short-term scheming, his assertion of power, his mechanism of torturing the children and his ultimate killing of Piggy and Simon?

Golding's only way out of the dilemma is to devise a long-term policy and show us how it can deliver the children from their suffering. But as the short-term

policies of Jack are the product of capitalist assertion of power, so is the long-term plan followed by Ralph a product of capitalist thinking which is crippled by its own future prospects, that is, the war in the homeland. Not that Ralph represents the capitalist way of thinking, but he certainly falls victim, as the novel shows very vividly, to that ideology by dismissing Piggy from the scene of events and by offering the leadership of the group undeservedly and undemocratically to Jack. This is precisely why Ralph cries at the end of the novel when he realizes that Piggy ~~was~~ the true friend.

Ralph's long-term plans are very clear from the beginning when he immediately thinks of rescuing the children: "Listen, everybody. I've got to have time to think things out. I can't decide what to do straight off. If this isn't an island we might be rescued straight away. So we've got to decide if this is an island..." (p. 25) The place, however, turns out to be an island. Jack, on the other hand, thinks up a way of immediate survival before they can be rescued: "We'll get food," cried Jack, "Hunt. Catch things ... until they fetch us." (p. 32) But it is Piggy who pushes Ralph to use his long-term thinking. Piggy uses his reasoning capacity from the very beginning: "Nobody knows where we are," said Piggy.... "Perhaps they knew where we was going to; and perhaps not. But they don't know where we are 'cos we never got there." (p. 37) It is very obvious that Piggy is inclined to use

logic in terms of premises and conclusions and it is clear how he starts Ralph off. Ralph takes the conch from Piggy's hands and continues: "That's what I was going to say," he went on, "when you all, all...." He gazed at their intent faces. "The plane was shot down in flames. Nobody knows where we are. We may be here a long time." (my emphasis, p. 37) We notice how Ralph ends his speech by a reminder about the long time, and we notice also the complete silence his warning incurs when he emphasises this point:

The silence was so complete that they could hear the fetch and miss of Piggy's breathing. The sun slanted in and lay golden over half the platform. The breezes that on the lagoon had chased their tails like kittens were finding their way across the tangle of fair hair that hung on his forehead.  
 "So we may be here a long time." (p. 37)

However, the situation is further problematised in Ralph's own diachronic thinking. It is true that in the long run diachronic thinking might prove more advantageous than the synchronic one, but the problem in Lord of the Flies for both Ralph and the author himself concerns history and the future. We know that Ralph wants to rescue the boys, but we also know that what he will come back to at home is more disastrous than what the boys have already got on the island. It is because of this "absence" of any potentially better future that Ralph is vaguely bemused. It is true that this problem of the future is not explicitly stated in the novel, yet there is an implicit

code of behaviour or "understanding" between Ralph and Jack which makes them tolerate each other to a certain extent. And how can we explain the immense pleasure that Ralph feels every time he is reassured of the reality of the island? Ralph's delightedness is expressed many times in the novel: "He patted the palm trunk softly; and, forced at last to believe in the reality of the island, laughed delightedly again and stood on his head." (p. 11)

The mission to find out whether the place is really an island claims all Ralph's attention. The conflict between wanting to stay on the island, if it proves to be an island, and the desire to be rescued to the world of grown-ups is strongly hinted at: "The cause of their pleasure was not obvious. All three were hot, dirty and exhausted. Ralph was badly scratched. The creepers were as thick as their thighs and left little but tunnels for further penetration. Ralph shouted experimentally and they listened to the muted echoes." (p. 29) But it is Ralph more than the others who is mostly excited and markedly delighted in the reality of the island; yet it is he who undertakes seriously the project of rescuing the children: "There was no place for standing on one's head. This time Ralph expressed the intensity of his emotion by pretending to knock Simon down; and soon they were a happy, heaving pile in the under-dusk." (p. 29) This intensity of emotion is pitted against a desire to go home. Ralph's frustration when the fire is out is very severe:

"The fire's the most important thing. Without the fire we can't be rescued. I'd like to put on war-paint and be a savage. But we must keep the fire burning. The fire's the most important thing on the island, because, because\_\_\_\_\_"

He paused again and the silence became full of doubt and wonder. (p. 156)

It is precisely this silence, which becomes full of doubt and wonder, which confirms the contradiction between the desire to go home and the desire to remain on the island. The fire is only a catalyst which is put out metaphorically and "intentionally" to highlight the contradiction. If rescue comes straight away to the boys the first time they light the fire, nothing at all would happen in the course of the novel. Simon and Piggy would not be killed. The feud between Ralph and Jack would be ruled out. The burning of the trees to smoke Ralph out would also be ruled out. The fire has to be put out for the story to go on. Happiness and misery are intertwined on the island itself in the first and second half of the novel respectively. Thus it becomes very clear why an island would be at once more significantly cherished than a stretch of land connected to the father land and more dreaded since it isolates the boys. But home itself (England) is also an island. This similarity might be an unconscious metaphor in Golding's mind. However, I would like to emphasise the word father since the feminine element is wiped out almost completely from the text even ideologically. It is not Ralph's mother who is going to

rescue the boys but his father: "Daddy taught me. He's a commander in the army. When he gets leave he'll come and rescue us." (p. 14) Feminism as an issue is driven out not only from the text but also from ideology altogether.

Women "figure" in the background in their "natural" capacity as reproducers of these commanders. But the ideological field of struggle and survival is reserved, as Lord of the Flies shows us, for men alone. However, if the father land is "significantly" the home where bombs explode and where life is intolerable, the best place to be in is an isolated island. The contradiction arises because "home" becomes at once a symbol of alienation and domestication or a symbol of the "exotic" and the "domestic". Ralph already hints that if the place is not an island they will be rescued straight away. Yet it is the island with its prospect of freedom which makes him delighted. The island itself becomes an incarnation or a symbol of connection and separation. However, one can see the island as a metaphor, perhaps a mixed one, of the womb into which the boys are unconsciously delighted to return because of what they see in the real "outside" world. All the boys are already on the island, and it would be reasonable to suggest that the island is a metaphor of the womb in what Golding himself reserves as the title to one of his articles: "Gaia Lives, OK?". Golding insists on the linkage between mother earth and the concept of life

itself. In Lord of the Flies, he describes the island as follows:

It was roughly boat-shaped; humped near this end with behind them the jumbled descent to the shore. On either side rocks, cliffs, tree-tops and a steep slope: forward there, the length of the boat, a tamer descent, tree-clad, with hints of pink; and then the jungly flat of the island, dense green, but drawn at the end to a pink tail. There, where the island petered out in the water, was another island; a rock, almost detached, standing like a fort, facing them across the green with one bold, pink bastion. (p. 31)

If we accept the island as a metaphor of the womb and thus "synecdochically" of the mother, the woman in her own right as an active member of society is still absent. All that we see on the island is destruction, from burning trees to the murders of Simon and Piggy. But perhaps this "absence" is significant in two ways. First, we are shown that it is men, in the guise of boys, who can be destructive rather than women. Secondly, we are still in the presence of a vague minatory force in the symbol of this "mother" island. If the boys decide to destroy the island (mother), she in turn would destroy them. The mother is at once gentle and strong. However vicious man can become, he comes back ultimately to the bowels of the earth, mother herself, as Golding makes clear in his second novel, The Inheritors. But although it might seem a far-fetched idea, the necessity of women's presence on the scene and their actual absence from it could well be the result of an already bourgeois, capitalist ideology which

sees the liberated woman as a problem and a real threat. How far does a woman's role in society go? Will women play any role in the future society in the first place? Another point must be raised here concerning the first of my two suggestions, that is, the idea that it is men rather than women who are more likely to destroy the island. If we really want to explain women's absence from the novel by that suggestion, then the argument might run into problems of biologism if we suggest that women are not capable of destruction biologically. I believe that their absence from the scene of events in the novel has more to do with ideology rather than any questions about biology. However, as we progress from Lord of the Flies to the trilogy, the number of women on the scene increases in Golding's fiction until at the end we have the (still fictional) association of both the language of poetry and the future itself with women. But apart from this, is there really any foreseeable better future in the eyes of Golding himself?

Golding exposes a contradiction at the heart of the boy's society. That which is created on the island is precisely a self-contradictory desire born out of the problematic future. If a paradisiacal island is not enough for man to establish a democratic society, then surely the future of man is hopeless. It is at this juncture that Golding's vision of a new society is at stake. Having shown us a realistic picture of a society in the process

of degeneration, Golding ends up abstracting certain features from human nature. One such feature is the almost inveterate inclination of man (in general not in particular) to destroy both his fellow man and nature. Golding is convinced that man in general is innately cruel, selfish and greedy although he does not portray Ralph, Simon and Piggy as any of these things. By bestowing upon the future those characteristics of the already degenerate present, Golding finds himself in a contradictory position. He writes: "Utopians, with their pretty pictures, their indifference to the fact of human nature and their assumption that even in a book it is possible to ignore the Heraclitean flux of things, are a feckless if good-humoured lot."<sup>15</sup> There is a stark contradiction between "the fact of human nature" and "the Heraclitean flux of things." Does Golding think that human nature is static? If the answer is "yes", then surely those utopians are not ignoring the Heraclitean flux of things if they show their indifference to this static human nature. Or does Golding think that human nature is changing? If the answer to this question is "yes", then in this case Golding is certainly involved in an unmistakable contradiction by bestowing the characteristics of the hopeless present upon the future disallowing thereby the operation of the Heraclitean flux of things whose existence he already admits. The future in Lord of the Flies is certainly as bleak as the present.

It is after this analysis that we can come to view another outlook towards the future. In his article "Fredric Jameson: The Politics of Style", Eagleton writes of "pleasure" and "*jouissance*":

"Pleasure" rather than "*jouissance*", then; and if this is so then there is doubtless a political reason for it. What distinguishes Marxism from the more debased forms of Romantic anarchism is not a refusal of *jouissance* but a recognition of its material grounds of possibility — grounds which properly exist not now but in what Marx in the *Brumaire* names the "poetry of the future". The poetry of the future, which we are forbidden to figure here and now on pain of utopian idolatry, furrows the present as a delectable potential in much the same way that Jameson's excess of style shadows but refuses to shatter his texts. This is perhaps the place to remark, incidentally, that what distinguishes Marxism from the various hermeneutical or post-structuralist debates about the intelligibility or otherwise of the historical past, its relation or discontinuity with the present, is that Marxism is only secondarily enthused by such issues, drawing its poetry as it does from a future to which it is simultaneously deferred. There is no historical conjuncture except from the standpoint of a desirable future.<sup>15</sup>

This lengthy quotation explains how Marxism understands the future. Eagleton discusses precisely the problem which Golding mentions above, that is, utopian idolatry. He argues that Marxism is distinguished by its recognition of the material grounds of the possibility of *jouissance*. Moreover, he talks of political reasons. The issues discussed in Eagleton's quotation touch the heart of Golding's philosophy and vision of the future although their views are diametrically opposed. Golding writes in "Belief and Creativity": "I could ... account for the fact

that Marxism always got the future wrong and excelled in predicting the past."<sup>17</sup> Eagleton emphasises the fact that Marxism is only secondarily enthused by such issues. What is important for Marxism is the future from which it draws its poetry. It is obvious that the Marxist vision of the future proves dialectically and practically to be the only one which is likely to offer humankind paradoxically a chance for real liberation from the chains of history itself.

In Lord of the Flies, Golding commits an embarrassing paradox when he situates the action in the future just to emerge at the other end crippled by what he himself is trying to propose. There is certainly no liberation or future in Lord of the Flies. The reason for this is not that there is really no future for mankind or that there is a future which is necessarily a pessimistic one, but that this historical pessimism has undergone a transformation in Golding's philosophy and fiction into religious pessimism which rejects the very history that has given birth to it. In his book William Golding, Samuel Hynes writes of Lord of the Flies: "First of all, [Golding] has used the science-fiction convention of setting his action in the future, thus substituting the eventually probable for the immediately actual, and protecting his fable from literalistic judgments of details or of credibility."<sup>18</sup> But surely the "eventually probable" itself is going to be there for a certain period

of time in the future rather than last for ever. Otherwise, we will certainly be locked once again in a position of stasis, a position which is neither real nor historical simply because everything in this universe is, as Golding well knows, in a process of change all the time. In other words, the principle of history is the concept of process itself.

But Golding projects his pessimism which is specifically historical on to the future in a way where future possibilities are blocked. He does not recognize the historicity of pessimism which produces his fiction in the first place. Instead, he tries to "create" pessimism rather than realize that the relation between pessimism as a concept and us is a historical and dialectical one. Because of this misrecognition, Golding severs man from history and renders him culpable of destroying nature. It is true that man is destroying nature, a fact which tends to make Golding's argument about evil look like a true argument rather than a specious one, but Golding does not take the interests of the ruling class and the struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie into consideration. Or perhaps he thinks this struggle does not exist. Disaster, in Golding's own words about Lord of the Flies, "was not to come through the exploitation of one class by another." But it is precisely this exploitation of one class by another which generates the evil in the first place, an evil that Golding himself exposes so

vividly in The Inheritors. Piggy, Simon and Ralph, the members of one group, are flagrantly exploited by Jack and Roger, the members of another group. Golding's idealist philosophy can be summarised in one sentence: Golding confuses the potentiality of evil in the general man with the actual evil acts that particular men commit. He takes man as a separate unit into whose amalgam are poured different sins and virtues. That is why it is so easy sometimes to pinpoint the contradictions in his fictions. Man is extracted from his historical, social context. But in the following extract from the novel, we will be able to pinpoint a contradiction at the heart of bourgeois ideology:

The rock struck Piggy a glancing blow from chin to knee; the conch exploded into a thousand white fragments and ceased to exist. Piggy, saying nothing, with no time for even a grunt, travelled through the air sideways from the rock, turning over as he went. The rock bounded twice and was lost in the forest. Piggy fell forty feet and landed on his back across that square, red rock in the sea. His head opened and stuff came out and turned red. Piggy's arms and legs twitched a bit, like a pig's after it has been killed. Then the sea breathed again in a long slow sigh, the water boiled white and pink over the rock; and when it went, sucking back again, the body of Piggy was gone.

(p. 200)

This scene of Piggy's death is described with considerable equanimity which adds to rather than reduces Golding's imaginative power. But the contradiction which I will explain in a moment involves Golding's narrator rather than Golding himself. But before that, I would like to

emphasise the way nature takes back what is due to her, that is, Piggy's body. Nature's claim to our bodies, Shakespeare's reminder to us and to his fair friend, is not denied in this passage. I would also like to emphasise the fact that imagination can be "witnessed" not only in "dialogue" but also in descriptions of nature. It is the concept of nature itself which is paramount in this passage. The first thing we notice about this passage is the invocation of the arms and legs of a pig. But the reader should bear in mind that this invocation is not there to belittle Piggy, although that might be the general purpose for a different reason, but to arouse the intended pathos which will in turn arouse attention to the fact that the worth of a human subject in the twentieth century has reached degree zero. Golding served in the army for more than 5 years during the Second World War and he might have seen death at close quarters. The strength, and also the weakness, of this passage lies precisely in the fact that the narrator narrates it with considerable equanimity rather than loses control over the narrative. The significance of this equanimity is to make us think rather than take death for granted in the rush of events. Thus Golding highlights the value of life precisely through death. We have to remember that in detaching himself from the narrative the way he does, Golding through his narrator imparts to us the horror of death through fiction whereby he "authenticates" the historical

conditions of his own horror at the war. However, what I am concerned with in this passage is not exactly or primarily equanimity itself or the way in which it might convey certain effects, but rather the more significant contradiction embedded in the bourgeois ideology, one which seems dormant and yet becomes coruscatingly present on closer inspection of this naturalist piece of description.

The description of the process of death in the passage can conveniently be subsumed within the naturalist genre. There is an obvious attempt on the part of the narrator to dissociate himself from the scene of events and to narrate what he sees in his Olympian, dispassionate view of "reality" as it unfolds in front of his eyes. The reader cannot help noticing the exact details in this passage in contrast with the vagueness of many other passages in the novel especially those dreamy moments that Ralph enjoys. In this passage, Piggy does not have time for a grunt; he travels through the air sideways; he turns over as he goes; the rock bounds exactly twice; Piggy falls exactly forty feet and lands on his back across the square, red rock; his head opens and stuff comes out and turns red; Piggy's arms and legs twitch just a bit; the sea on the other side breathes; the water boils white and pink over the rock and sucks back again; and bang, the body of Piggy is gone. The reader would at first sight be absolutely justified to think that no traces of subjectivity are

lingering in this passage. Yet it is precisely in the inscription of these details in this particular way that we are invited to remember the nervously twitching narrator appealing to us to situate him as the only omniscient subjectivity that could arrange the text in this manner. It is absolutely vital for Golding to show the subject in control of what it is doing since this would be compatible with his suggestion that man is responsible for his actions. Narration is, of course, an action. Therefore, the narrator should be responsible for what he is narrating. In the same way there is a subject behind Piggy's murder, there is also a subject behind this narrative. But Golding cannot adhere completely to the naturalist mode since doing that would prove without doubt the primacy of matter over spirit. If this is proved, then the human subject cannot be held responsible for its actions and therefore Golding's assertion that the locus of all evil is in the will of man would be untrue. In other words, the crisis for Golding in a society which has only recently emerged from a world war is a crisis of the bourgeois subjectivity. In "Belief and Creativity", Golding declares that:

The novelist is God of his own interior world. Commonly men make God in their own image—he is a warrior, a lover, a mathematician, a father, a son, mother, a remote universal and a small image in the corner of a room. Let us add our quota of inadequate description and say that he is of all things an artist who labours under no compulsion but that of his own infinite creativity. Are we, in some sense, his novels? We are said to be made in his image and if we

could but understand our flashes of individual creativity we might glimpse the creativity of the ultimate Creator!<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting to see the shift from the suggestion that commonly men make God in their own image (what is wrong with Pincher Martin then?) to the idea that we are made in his image, the ultimate Creator. In this confusion, every thing is permissible and rationalism itself, which might be our philosophical guide to reason about this world, would figure just as another element in this world to complete it rather than the principal criterion for understanding how things work. But if the novelist is God of his own interior world, why does his agent, the narrator, seem to disappear from the scene of Piggy's death? To put it differently, who is the God of this scene? In a brilliant reading of The Secret Agent, Professor Eagleton charts a similar contradiction to the one revealed in the passage above:

Constrained at once to consecrate "normative" reality as a material process on which the subjective is slavishly contingent, and to reject such dreary positivism in the name of those privileged, cataclysmic moments in which the subjective is assertively alive, the novel subsists in a series of "gaps"\_\_between what can be known and what can be shown, between the discourse of "experience" and of description, between the styles of metaphysics and social documentation.<sup>20</sup>

Lord of the Flies is similarly constrained to do so, for there is a great danger to the whole discourse of the novel posited by the character of Piggy, the only child

who is willing to foreground his innocent scientific explorations into the world. The novel is "naturalistic" only to the extent where Piggy does not insist on having "scientific" convincing answers to what goes on on the island. But after that, the text must go back to its ambiguities and mystification. But if mystification is the privilege of the author as we have seen earlier, Golding does not pause to see whether his own reader will be able to grasp the message (the human lesson) in the novel. Applying Golding's philosophy to a bourgeois ruling class in which its manipulators are the "story-tellers", the ultimate and "validated" aim would be to fulfil the prime clause in an unwritten contract between these manipulators and their consumers. It is not insignificant that most of the English law is unwritten.

In his book, Against the Grain: Selected Essays, Eagleton considers the textual process as a necessity whereby: "It is this necessity of the textual process which is the object of scientific literary study."<sup>21</sup> A scientific literary study of Piggy's death will certainly reveal the crisis of the text in Lord of the Flies and ultimately the crisis of subjectivity behind it. To start this study, the following question must be asked: Why does the text belittle Piggy almost throughout the novel while at the same time making his death scene and Ralph's memory of him a "reverent" occasion?

The answer to this question is bound not only to shed light on the historical determinants of ideology (as we shall see in a moment) but also to highlight the personal relationship between Golding and his father and the way in which the scientifically-minded, atheist father had fared in the world between 1876-1957. Alec Albert Golding died just three years after Lord of the Flies came out. In shedding light on the father's life and his scientific inclinations, I intend to suggest the presence of a "metaphor" between Golding's father and Piggy. I am already aware of a potential objection on the part of some critics as to this kind of treatment, but the similarities between the real historical father and the fictional character Piggy are too many to be dismissed as irrelevant. These similarities reside not only in the scientific inclination of both "characters" but also extend themselves to their personal appearances.

In his article, "Alec Albert Golding 1876-1957", Peter Moss writes:

In appearance, at least in the 1930s, he had something of the tourist's concept of a pixie from the Cornwall he so much loved—short, slight, with a round cherubic face topped by a bald pate that gleamed whatever the weather, and a tonsure of white hair. The gold-rimmed glasses which should have rested on the snub nose were more often pushed up on the forehead as he peered short-sightedly at a book, or into a microscope muttering like an incantation, "Paramoecium ... vorticella ... volvox ..."<sup>22</sup>

On the other hand, on the first page of the novel, the description of Piggy's appearance runs as follows:

The owner of the voice came backing out of the undergrowth so that twigs scratched on a greasy wind-breaker. The naked crooks of his knees were plump, caught and scratched by thorns. He bent down, removed the thorns *carefully*, and turned round. He was shorter than the fair boy and very fat. He came forward, searching out a safe lodgements for his feet, and then looked up through thick spectacles.

(p. 7, my italics)

A few pages later we are told that Piggy "wiped his glasses and adjusted them on his button nose." (p. 11) From both descriptions, it is not unfair to assume that these similarities are not coincidental. But what is more important than the outward appearance is the fact that Piggy behaves exactly like a "little" scientist (after all, Piggy is only a child). His behaviour is described as always careful and attentive. The first question Piggy asks is: "Where's the man with the megaphone?" (p. 7) Piggy seems to know everything with scientific precision: "There was that pilot. But he wasn't in the passenger tube, he was up in the cabin in front." (p. 8) A few lines later some "scientific" details start to appear: "He must have flown off after he dropped us. He couldn't land here. Not in a plane with wheels." Still in the same encounter, Piggy's acute observation is still on display: "When we was coming down I looked through one of them windows. I saw the other part of the plane. There were flames coming out of it." (p. 8) Guessing at the possibility of some

children still being left in the passenger tube, Piggy argues: "That storm dragged it out to sea. It wasn't half dangerous with all them tree trunks falling. There must have been some kids still in it." (p. 9) Later when Piggy has to disappear into the jungle to answer a call of nature, he gives the right reason for being in need of doing that frequently: "Them fruit." (p. 9) The adverbs associated with this behaviour are "carefully" and "critically": "The fat boy lowered himself over the terrace and sat down carefully, using the edge as a seat." (p. 11) Later on: "He looked critically, at Ralph's golden body and then down at his own clothes." (p. 11) The significant word which is missing when Ralph is introduced is the word "carefully": "The boy with fair hair lowered himself down the last few feet of rock and began to pick his way towards the lagoon." (p. 7) It is only after he has been deceived that Ralph starts inspecting things carefully: "Ralph had been deceived before now by the specious appearance of depth in a beach pool and he approached this one preparing to be disappointed.... Ralph inspected the whole thirty yards carefully and then plunged in." (p. 13) At last, Piggy's careful behaviour infuriates Ralph and makes him heap every contumely on his first companion:

Piggy took off his shoes and socks, ranged them carefully on the ledge, and tested the water with one toe.

"It's hot!"

"What did you expect?"

"I didn't expect nothing. My auntie\_\_\_\_"  
 "Sucks to your auntie!"

(p. 13)

But it is only a moment ago when Ralph himself is seen inspecting the whole thirty yards carefully and then plunging in. It is true that Piggy is too careful and that it is admirable to see Ralph romantically embrace the "unknown" bravely, but critics of character who think Ralph is a more "polite" character than Piggy are certainly mistaken. When Piggy tells Ralph a few lines earlier about his asthma, the latter answers humiliatingly: "Ass-mar?" (p. 9) Moreover, we learn from the narrative that Piggy is pleased for the slightest attention he can get from Ralph and that he is a diffident boy: "Piggy grinned reluctantly, pleased despite himself at even this much recognition." (p. 12) It is very important to realise how significant this theme of recognition is. It certainly has a lot to do with the differences of class that separate Ralph from Piggy. Ralph already boasts that his father is a commander in the Navy and when he enquires about Piggy's father, "Piggy flushed suddenly. My dad's dead." (p. 14) The significance of the theme of recognition in Literature is recognised in Barthes' discussion of The Lady of the Camellias in his book Mythologies. He writes lengthily:

Yet in fact, the central myth in The Lady of the Camellias is not Love, it is Recognition. Marguerite loves in order to achieve recognition, and this is why her passion ... has its source entirely in other people. Armand, on the other hand (who is the son of a

District Collector of Taxes), gives an example of classical love: bourgeois, descended from essentialist culture, and one which will live on in Proust's analyses. This is a segregative love ... which acknowledges the existence of the world only intermittently and always with a feeling of frustration, as if the world were never anything but the threat of some theft .... Marguerite's Love is the perfect opposite of this. She was first touched to feel herself *recognized* by Armand, and passion, to her, was thereafter nothing but the permanent demand for this recognition; this is why the sacrifice which she grants M. Duval in renouncing Armand is by no means moral (in spite of the phraseology used), it is existential; it is only the logical consequence of the postulate of recognition, a superlative means (much better than love) of winning recognition from the world of the masters. And if Marguerite hides her sacrifice and gives it the mask of cynicism, this can only be at the moment when the argument really becomes literature: the grateful and recognizing gaze of the bourgeois class is here delegated to the reader who in his turn *recognizes* Marguerite through the very mistake of her lover.<sup>23</sup>

I quote this passage at such a length not only to show the difference between two classes in society but mainly because the first chapter in Lord of the Flies centres almost in its entirety around this important theme of recognition. It is precisely in these "little" gestures that the key to understand the larger issues in the novel lies. I put the word "little" between inverted commas simply because many critics and readers tend to concentrate on what they think more significant and larger issues than this little gesture of recognition. I believe these gestures of recognition have a lot to do with unconscious ideological orientations within the characters themselves. We have to realise that Ralph and Piggy belong from the beginning to different classes through the very

important index of language. The latter seeks recognition even on the level of exchanging names:

He hesitated for a moment then spoke again.

"What's your name?"

"Ralph."

The fat boy waited to be asked his name in turn but this proffer of acquaintance was not made.... (p. 9)

It is important to see through this arrogant gesture from Ralph in his curt reply. It is precisely an aristocratic gesture, and to borrow the phrase from Barthes, it is a segregative gesture. This segregation would seem to be embodied in language itself. There is a sharp difference between Piggy's "concrete" world of meaning and Ralph's dreamy state of mind:

"How does he know we're here?"

Ralph lolled in the water. Sleep enveloped him like swathing mirages that were wrestling with the brilliance of the lagoon.

"How does he know we're here?"

Because, thought Ralph, because, because. The roar from the reef became very distant.

"They'd tell him at the airport."

Piggy shook his head, put on his flashing glasses and looked down at Ralph.

"Not them. Didn't you hear what the pilot said? About the atom bomb? They are all dead." (p. 14)

The irony, however, is that Piggy seems to be the one who is in control while Ralph is the one who is out of this world altogether. One would imagine Piggy to be saying: "You, idiot, didn't you hear what the pilot said?" Ralph's answer to this question comes one page later:

Ralph said nothing. Here was a coral island. Protected from the sun, ignoring Piggy's ill-omened talk, he dreamed pleasantly.

Piggy insisted.

"How many of us are there?"

Ralph came forward and stood by Piggy.

"I don't know."

(p. 15)

It seems to me that this pleasant dreaming is an exquisite metaphor of the aristocratic attitude. I am treating Ralph's character here through its "embodiment" of certain aristocratic and bourgeois features. In his book Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontës, Terry Eagleton describes such an osmosis not only in a fictional context but also in a historical one: "Traditional landed society assimilated these rich merchant families; county families moved at ease with industrial magnates, and in the early decades of the nineteenth century a new osmosis between gentry and manufacturers took place, on the basis of a growing eighteenth-century alliance of interests."<sup>24</sup> Certain features of both the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie can be detected in Ralph's character. His desire to transcend what seems to be a "crude" utilitarianism exhibited by Jack in his hunt for meat to "satisfy" all the participants does not seem to conflict with his own pragmatism in insisting (pragmatically) that the fire be burning all the time. To put it differently, two "incompatible" modes of behaviour seem to coexist in Ralph's character: on the one hand, a desire for justice reflected in his acceptance of the democratic voting for a

chief and on the other hand, an apparently munificent, unaccountable gesture of offering the leadership of the other group to Jack. In other words, we can see a middle-class respect for "strict exchanges" (what every character strictly deserves) enacted in the novel in the notion of justice -fair votes- and an aristocratic desire for surpassing all strict exchanges- enacted in Ralph's unfair treatment of Piggy by alienating him and by offering the leadership to Jack undeservedly rocking therefore the scale of justice by surpassing it altogether.

The penalty which Ralph pays for his alienation of Piggy is ironically his own later alienation by the whole society of boys. The importance of the theme of recognition is enhanced because it is emphasised more than once in the text: "Ralph looked through him. Here at last was the imagined but never fully realized place leaping into real life. Ralph's lips parted in a delighted smile and Piggy, taking this smile to himself as a mark of recognition, laughed with pleasure." (p. 16) The excruciating irony is that it is precisely a misrecognition rather than a recognition. But later the segregative gesture is sealed with Piggy completely outside: "A storm of laughter arose and even the tiniest child joined in. For the moment the boys were a closed circuit of sympathy with Piggy outside: he went very pink, bowed his head and cleaned his glasses again." (p. 23) The reader should bear in mind that this humiliation is caused

precisely through Ralph's betrayal of Piggy. Piggy, on the other hand, can be seen as a character which is conscious of its surroundings all the time. Indeed, Piggy, like a theoretician rather than an ideologue, continues to ask questions about almost everything in the novel. It is this consciousness of the situation which brings him close to a representation of the working class in its historical consciousness of its own conditions of existence. And it is significant that in Lord of the Flies, the final memory is that of the wise friend called Piggy. We shall see later how in real life, Golding's father, a parent who gave his son the mild feeling that the Labour Party was on their side, was not given the chance to fulfil his potential in the educational field. In the fictional context as in the historical one, both characters "are" deprived of the chance to fulfil a certain potential.

Before I proceed to discuss the social position of the scientifically-minded Alec Golding, I will quote from the novel the passage where the theme of recognition is recognized as perhaps the most important of all: "Piggy saw the smile and misinterpreted it as friendliness. There had grown up tacitly among the biguns the opinion that Piggy was an outsider, not only by accent, which did not matter, but by fat, and ass-mar, and specs, and a certain disinclination for manual labour. Now, finding that something he had said made Ralph smile, he rejoiced and pressed his advantage." (p. 70) However, critics who think

that Golding is implicitly denegrating the faculty of reason in Piggy are certainly mistaken. Golding has a lot of implicit admiration for his character Piggy. That is precisely why he makes Ralph wonder:

Ralph moved impatiently. The trouble was, if you were a chief you had to think, you had to be wise. And then the occasion slipped by so that you had to grab at a decision. This made you think; because thought was a valuable thing, that got results.... Only, decided Ralph as he faced the chief's seat, I can't think. Not like Piggy. (p. 85)

It is clear how the "Egyptian unreason" is not likely to be useful in Ralph's situation. The contradiction compounded for Golding revolves precisely around the concept of reason.

Golding's father was isolated because he insisted on the value of reasoning. Peter Moss writes: "This rejection of doctrinaire religious belief was completely rational and never flaunted: it was for him, like his socialism and his pacifism, a passionately-held personal opinion which concerned no one but himself."<sup>25</sup> Later on, Moss writes:

AAG's passionately held pacifist and socialist views were as well known as his atheism: perhaps the combination of all three was a factor in his not advancing in the educational field, at least in strictly conservative and Conservative Wiltshire.... Though socialism was so important to him, and though his lessons were so wide ranging, politics was almost never mentioned.<sup>26</sup>

When he was asked by a pupil after the election of 1935: "Whom did you vote for, sir?", Alec Golding beamed: "I'm

not going to tell you whom I voted for," he said, "but I will tell you that in the whole of my life I have never voted for a candidate who was elected."<sup>27</sup> In the toy of voting in Lord of the Flies which was "almost as pleasing as the conch" (p. 24), we are told that "Every hand outside the choir except Piggy's was raised immediately. Then Piggy, too, raised his hand grudgingly into the air." (p. 24) We must remember that it is Ralph who is to be voted chief. It is not unreasonable to suggest that Piggy's characteristics are similar to those of Golding's father. Firstly, Piggy is reluctant to vote for Ralph straight away. Secondly, his way of solving problems is definitely scientific in the sense that he is willing to use his reasoning capacity than simply believe in supernatural beings. One can say that Piggy is an atheist character too. Thirdly and most importantly, Piggy is paradoxically short-sighted rather than long-sighted. I say most importantly not only because there is a comparison with Golding's father but also because Golding himself takes a hasty, uncritical decision to create a short-sighted character like Piggy committing thereby the scientific error of providing it with glasses which cannot be assumed for those purposes in the novel by short-sighted people.

After proving on the evidence from the novel that Piggy is nearsighted, W. Eugene Davis writes in an article entitled "Mr. Golding's Optical Delusion":

Mr. Golding's error is simply this: a nearsighted person's spectacles are incapable of focusing light rays to a point. As any optician knows, the image in a nearsighted person's eyes is formed in front of the retina, so a concave (or minus) lens is required to correct this condition. And as any Boy Scout knows, it takes a convex (or plus) lens to gather light rays to a point. So either Mr. Golding erred in describing Piggy's visual defect as "myopia" or in attributing to Piggy's spectacles the power of focusing the sun's rays to start fires.<sup>29</sup>

Davis quotes from the novel the passage where Piggy sat "expressionless behind the luminous wall of his myopia" (p. 187) But every thing in the text testifies to Piggy's intellectuality or metaphorically his long-sightedness rather than his short-sightedness. We are told, for example, that: "The boys began to babble. Only Piggy could have the intellectual daring to suggest moving the fire from the mountain." (p. 143) Even so, we are told later on that "Piggy once more was the centre of social derision so that everyone felt cheerful and normal." (p. 164) It seems that there is no reason why Piggy should not be considered the real hero in Lord of the Flies although he is subjected to all this humiliation. I believe that Golding's own background has a lot to do with the way his characters assume their roles in the novel. In an answer to a question put to him by John Carey about whether he ever felt in his father's shadow, Golding said:

Yes. I did: unconsciously, I think, for a long time. But later, when one starts looking back over one's life, I did see that I'd been in his shadow, particularly, I suppose, philosophically, in that he had made of himself a Wellsian rationalist\_\_should I

call it\_\_and because he was who he was, I took this; and for a long time I suppose I half convinced myself I was a rationalist, atheist, and so on. Whereas I don't think I was instinctively any of these things at all. This is a condemnation, I suppose, of a human relationship. Because I should have freed myself from him early, or he should have pushed me off, or something. But there it was.<sup>229</sup>

I will contend that Golding does see himself represented perhaps unconsciously in the character of Ralph while his father seems to be also unconsciously represented in the character of Piggy. I believe that there is a kind of psychological displacement of Golding's feeling of disappointment with his father for not pushing him off, as he put it. We must bear in mind that the first encounter in the novel is between Ralph and Piggy. We must also remember Ralph's desire to be able to think like Piggy. We know that Ralph is separated at the end from Piggy but only to his cost. Thus if we take this parallel to be true, Golding "achieves", through his protagonist, the dreamt-of separation from his father's shadow while at the same time regretting the loss which this separation would incur. But if we apply this parallel to the literary articulation within the novel itself, we will be able to detect two different modes of description which will reflect a scientific attitude and a nonchalant attitude.

Throughout the novel, Piggy is described articulately as a careful character. Moreover, the death of this character itself is described in an unobtrusive, "scientific" manner as if it is a truthful gesture to

Piggy's character. On the other hand, the passages describing Ralph's dreams are written in something like a pastoral mode:

Ralph was dreaming. He had fallen asleep after what seemed hours of tossing and turning noisily among the dry leaves. Even the sounds of nightmare from the other shelters no longer reached him, for he was back from where he came from, feeding the ponies with sugar over the garden wall. Then someone was shaking his arm, telling him that it was time for tea. (pp. 107-08)

There is a clear conflict on the level of form between these two modes of narration. Piggy's death scene is described almost objectively, while it is difficult to know what Ralph is thinking without penetrating into his "mind" and thus dreaming for him. It is also possible to suggest that perhaps it is easier for Golding himself to know what a character like Ralph would think than to "imagine" a dialogue for a "scientific" character like Piggy. But the text of Lord of the Flies shows a clear bias towards Ralph's liberal philosophy. Ralph, Piggy and Jack are all involved in a contradiction compounded because of the concept of liberalism.

After he is elected chief, Ralph is eager to offer Jack something in a liberal gesture: "Ralph looked at him, eager to offer something. The choir belongs to you, of course." (p. 24) Not only does the choir belong to Jack, but also "of course." This is where the contradiction begins. Moreover, Piggy's reluctance to vote Ralph as chief could now be seen in a different light. It could be

said that Piggy can instinctively, in addition to his intellectual power, judge rightly. Only three pages before Ralph's offer to Jack, we are told that "What [Jack] saw of the fair-haired boy with the creamy shell on his knees did not seem to satisfy him." (p. 21) It would seem very difficult in those circumstances in the novel to imagine a good reason for which Jack should be offered the leadership of the choir unless it is an unconscious gesture of restoring an old order which "existed" before the boys arrive on the island. In this sense, it would be an undemocratic, unliberal gesture on Ralph's part to offer this leadership to Jack since Jack is not chosen by the boys in the way he himself is chosen. This is the first "textual" undemocratic gesture. In order for the text to sustain its own textuality, it has to pursue this undemocratic gesture in the manner of poetic justice. Piggy is hurt by Ralph's action; Simon is murdered in the process; Ralph himself is smoked out at the end of the novel. It is only in this way that we can speak of textual ideology. Revealing the contradictions in the text necessarily means the end of the text as text.

Golding's claim that "the boys find an earthly paradise" gradually loses its meaning since it is not the paradise which decides the future for the boys but the "political" prejudices which come with the boys to the island. These prejudices are ideological and they will not go away in a bourgeois society which thrives for its own

existence on such prejudices. Perhaps Ralph's liberal gesture of offering the leadership of the choir to Jack can be seen as a justification of Golding's belief in the will of man to do things. In his book, William Golding: A Study, Subbarao writes: "Actively opposed as he is to the behaviorist assumption that human ills are related to the environment, Golding puts the locus of all evil in the "will" of man."<sup>30</sup> But surely, if the locus of evil is in the will of man, the locus of good must necessarily and logically be in the will of man too. Ralph's offer can only be interpreted as his willingness to be "nice" to Jack. We are told that Ralph was eager to offer something. Perhaps it is this belief, then, which makes Golding reluctant, as we have seen earlier, to have a Marxist exegesis of Lord of the Flies. Marx explicitly states that: "In the social production of their life, men enter into definite relations that are indispensable and independent of their will, *relations of production* which correspond to a definite stage of development of their material productive *forces*."<sup>31</sup> It seems to me that the problem lies in the politically hierachical society which causes such features as selfishness, cruelty and greed to exist in the first place rather than vice versa. We notice that it is precisely when the boys' society "becomes" hierarchical, something which happens hurriedly in Lord of the Flies, that these features appear.

It is true that the political is dealt with in Lord of the Flies, but it is misjudged by locating it on the conscious plane. It is mostly in the realm of the unconscious that the political with all its implications resides. The problem as I see it is one of dissociating the conscious from the unconscious in the novel. What Ralph (and perhaps Golding himself) cannot understand is how democracy does not prevail when everything is set for it. But the quest for power and authority together with its unconscious causes precedes and necessarily conditions the prevalence of democracy on the island. Therefore, Golding is involved in an endless "opening" of the unconscious of "man", his own, of course, included. (Think, for example, when he makes Ralph realize that he humiliated Piggy or when Ralph realizes that one way or another he is guilty of the murder of Simon). The problem which follows from that is that "another" unconscious displaces the one which has just been laid bare in an endless movement. In his book, The Politics of Social Theory, Russell Keat writes: "The victims of ideology may in some sense be said to be "unconscious" of certain things, but surely not of things that they had at one time been conscious of, and then repressed. To free oneself from ideology is not to recover a lost element of one's past."<sup>22</sup> It could be said that one of the reasons for the frustration we come across in Lord of the Flies is this inability to track the unconscious down. It is a

frustrating moment for Ralph when he reaches a situation where he does not know anything about what is happening on the island. The responsibility of keeping the little society in order proves to be a heavy burden on his shoulders. This whole matter is looked upon as a process of burdening and unburdening:

Ralph, having begun the business of unburdening himself, continued.  
 "Piggy, what's wrong?"  
 Piggy looked at him in astonishment.  
 "Do you mean the\_\_\_?"  
 "No, not it ... I mean ... what makes things break up like they do?" (p. 154)

It is clear that Piggy and Ralph are speaking at once on the same and on different wavelengths. Ralph understands Piggy but Piggy does not understand Ralph. Yet Ralph does not understand why things are what they are. He seems to be able to read Piggy's mind but unable to understand the reasons for the mess on the island. But as we have seen earlier, Ralph contradicts his own call for democratic action. He "simply" chooses Jack rather than Piggy for the leadership of the other group. But with power comes authority. Jack is almost instantly transformed by Ralph's action from a humiliated boy who is not elected chief into an authoritarian character which subjects the rest of the boys to its will. But it is precisely at this point that complexities arise. Authority has its own fascination (in such a society) in the sense of one's ability to control other people's actions. Ralph

does not abuse his authority. But if Jack does, we have to probe deeper into the reasons that make him do so. It is in this quest for the reasons that the issue becomes psychoanalytically and politically important. It is not totally true, for instance, to say that Jack is greedy. He offers meat to all the boys on the island although sometimes unwillingly. It is obvious that Jack is "fulfilling" a deep hidden desire within him. And it is in the unconscious that we must be searching for these desires to understand them. It is not enough to brand such desires to control and torture other subjects as evil. Before I illustrate the problem of the unconscious from Lord of the Flies, I would like to emphasise that the unconscious itself is conditioned "materially". To tackle problems of political power and authority would necessarily mean to venture into the realm of matter, and thus to try to understand the consequent unfairness of the political distribution of that power in a certain society. In his book, Anti-Duhring, Engels writes:

The materialist conception of history starts from the principle that production and, next to production, the exchange of things produced, is the basis of every social order; that in every society that has appeared in history, the distribution of wealth and with it the division of society into classes or estates are dependent upon what is produced, how it is produced, and how the products are exchanged. Accordingly, the ultimate causes of all social changes and political revolutions are to be sought, not in men's brains, not in their growing insight into eternal truth and justice, but in changes in the modes of production and exchange. They are to be sought, not in the *philosophy*, but in the *economics* of each particular epoch. 33

Although we are within a literary text rather than a "real" society in Lord of the Flies, we still glimpse the same operation of this principle in the novel. In other words, the textual ideology cannot be seen as "unrealistic" in this respect. Jack does not lure the boys away because of his becoming behaviour or his "philosophical" plan for rescue since he has none of these but precisely because he ventures into the realm of producing cooked meat for the children. And I mentioned earlier Gregor's assertion that it is Ralph's association with the shell rather than his attractiveness which makes the children choose him as their leader. Jack is instinctively aware of the pleasurable effects of his action on the children and they sneak after him one by one when he engages them in action (production). Although Ralph's plan engages the boys in action to build a tent or light a fire, he still fails to answer the basic needs of the boys. We know that Jack capitalizes on this "error". This enables him to exploit the children at the end. However, in order for Golding to prove his thesis, he hastens to place the boys on a paradisiacal island. But there are some indications that he would not be able to achieve a realistic picture by doing that. David Spitz thinks of an immediate serious problem for Golding:

For what Golding has forgotten is that a state of nature is not necessarily a state of political and moral innocence. The boys who inhabited the island did

not spring up full-blown, as did Athena from Zeus's head. They were the carefully chosen products of an already established middle-class society. They were socialized in, and were a partial microcosm of, twentieth century English (or Western) civilization...<sup>34</sup>

There is a clear sign of systematization in Lord of the Flies in the sense that each major character is made to symbolize some particular aspect. However, Golding has not really forgotten the boys' origin. He charts understandably and graphically a picture of a gradual process of oblivion concerning the political and moral aspects of a human society:

Roger gathered a handful of stones and began to throw them. Yet there was a space round Henry, perhaps six yards in diameter, into which he dare not throw. Here, invisible yet strong, was the taboo of the old life. Round the squatting child was the protection of parents and school and policemen and the law. Roger's arm was conditioned by a civilization that knew nothing of him and was in ruins. (p. 67)

This passage is absolutely characteristic of the way in which Golding perplexes and disarms his readers. It is abundantly clear from this passage that what Golding is involved in is nothing less than the unconscious itself with almost all its conditioning elements: the parents, the school, the policemen and the law. In brief, it is the taboo of the old life. Is it not perplexing, then, that Golding leaves all these sharp observations to concentrate on mere abstractions such as selfishness, greed and evil? Golding is not unaware of the boys' background. But what

happens, I believe, is a "deliberate" but costly repression of some problems that Golding anticipates. Golding makes it absolutely clear, as we have seen earlier, that he does not want to complicate the issue with the most important component of the realm of the unconscious, that is, "overt" sex. It is in this sense that his attempt is deliberate. But there is another matter to be considered here. Golding's attempt to portray little boys on an island does not efface the political nature of their society. The boys' society is political almost from the start. The division of power between two leaders, the voting game for electing leaders "democratically", Piggy's engagement in demographic (statistical) operations on the island, the systematic eradication of Piggy by Jack and Roger on top of the rock and the similar mysterious eradication of Simon, the attempt to provide food and shelter for the boys, all these things are certainly political strategies. It is obvious that there is a political unconscious actively at work in the text. But as political activities in real life have sometimes a vague, ambiguous nature, so are the political tactics in the novel. The text of Lord of the Flies is enshrouded in ambiguities which can be a guide to many contradictions:

"The fair boy called Ralph smiled vaguely" (p. 9), "and most obscurely, yet most powerfully, there was the conch" (p. 24), "the cause of their pleasure was not obvious" (p. 29), "something he had not known was there rose in him and compelled him to make the point" (p. 40), "some hidden passion vibrated in Ralph's voice" (p. 55), "the opaque, mad look came into his

eyes again" (p. 58), "they looked at each other, baffled, in love and hate" (p. 60), "the littluns watched inscrutably over double handfuls of ripe fruit" (p. 61), "strange things happened at midday" (p. 63), "balanced on a high peak of need, agonized by indecision, Ralph cried out" (p. 73), "Jack checked, vaguely irritated by this irrelevance" (p. 75), "Jack had done the right thing, had put himself in the right by his generous apology and Ralph, obscurely, in the wrong" (p. 79), "against this weapon, so indefinable and so effective, Jack was powerless and raged without knowing why" (p. 79), "numberless and inexpressible frustrations combined to make his rage elemental" (p. 81), "Simon became inarticulate in his effort to express mankind's essential illness" (p. 97), "As an answer Jack dropped into the uncomprehending silence" (p. 97), "into his uncertain silence the tribe spilled their murmur." (p. 178)

It is difficult to see how the human lesson (message) can be conveyed to the reader if the bearer of that message, Simon, is inarticulate in his effort to express mankind's essential illness. It is obvious that the reason behind this inarticulateness lies in the concept of human nature itself as understood by Golding. The text makes it clear that the message concerns mankind's essential illness. We have seen earlier how Golding insists that: "the only enemy of man is inside him." But how can mankind get rid of the enemy if the enemy is mankind itself? Golding reminds us that the theme of the book is grief, sheer grief. Obviously, this grief is there because Golding himself cannot see a way out of these contradictions. He is caught up in the contradiction of the futureless future precisely because of his generalisation about the nature of man. It is Golding's philosophy as embedded in Lord of the Flies which is under

critical scrutiny in the following quotation. In his article, "William Golding and Original Sin", Paul O'Flinn writes the following in what he considers to be a Marxist book:

But what's this? James R. Baker claims that the purpose of Lord of the Flies "was to show that the perennially repeated fall of man is caused by defects inherent in his own nature". William Golding agrees, and says that the book's aim is "to trace the defects of society back to the defects of human nature". So here we are at the heart of the matter. It's not just British middle-class males who are rubbish, it's everybody, it's human nature, says the novel and its author. That's why our fall is "perennially repeated" and that's why any of us would reduce a paradise to a flaming hell in a couple of hundred pages....<sup>35</sup>

O'Flinn goes on to discuss Golding's claim about the collapse of superior culture. He then follows that by an analysis of the concept of human nature, a concept that is at the heart of contradictions in Lord of the Flies. For this reason, I would like to quote the lengthy passage relating to this issue:

But setting aside the whole question of whether superior culture has collapsed or not, there is nonetheless a clear contradiction in the unchanging human nature brigade's claim that it *has* collapsed. Either human nature is fixed and unchanging, in which case it will tend broadly to reproduce itself and its conditions unchanged over generations, or human nature is ever-shifting, ever-evolving, in which case it will constantly be caught up in remaking, revolutionising, wrecking and rebuilding itself and its conditions, its culture and its habits. Human nature and the culture that nature generates either stays the same or it doesn't. You can't have it both ways. You can't insist that human nature is always the same and muse on about the eternal darkness of man's heart, and then with the next breath write articles for the *Times Literary Supplement* complaining about the way things are changing and getting worse. The root of contradictions

of this sort is the fact that the "human nature" argument is not so much truth as ideology — a conscious or unconscious attempt, that is, by a group or its spokesmen to interpret the world in terms that justify and sustain that group and its interests. What we are offered is not the real world but rather the illusion and fears of a class about that world. Hence the contradictions.<sup>36</sup>

I would like to clarify one point about this quotation. O'Flinn is right about the contradiction of human nature. He is also right in saying that it is not so much truth as ideology and that what we are offered are the illusions and fears of a class about that world. But if O'Flinn means to suggest that Golding himself might be a spokesman of that group or that ideology, then he is obviously mistaken. It is highly unlikely that a novelist who spends all his career exposing in his fiction middle-class contradictions will himself be involved in an attempt to justify them. It is true that Golding unwittingly helps to obscure some of those contradictions but not because he might be a spokesman of that ideology. Moreover, it is difficult for one person or a collection of books to justify ideology. Ideologies in general permeate the unconscious of a whole society in a very complex manner. The problem for Golding lies in his religious pessimism. Perhaps it is Golding himself who can explain the contradiction of the futureless future better than any one else:

What I am trying to do is to add together those elements, some horrible, some merely funny, but all significant, which I suppose to be the forces of off-

campus history. They are a failure of human sympathy, ignorance of facts, the objectivizing of our own inadequacies so as to make a scapegoat. At moments of optimism I have felt that education and perhaps a miracle or two would be sufficient to remove their more dangerous elements. When I feel pessimistic, then they seem to constitute a trap into which humanity has got itself with a dreary inevitability much as the dinosaur trapped itself in its own useless armour. For if humanity has a future on this planet of a hundred million years, it is unthinkable that it should spend those aeons in a ferment of national self-satisfaction and chauvinistic idiocies. I was feeling pessimistic when I tried to include a sign for this thing in a fable.<sup>37</sup>

However, the paradox which Golding does not supersede in his fear of national self-satisfaction and chauvinistic idiocies can be explained. An African character in Raymond Williams's novel Second Generation (London, 1964) remarks: "Nationalism is in this sense like class. To have it, and to feel it, is the only way to end it. If you fail to claim it, or give it up too soon, you will merely be cheated, by other classes and other nations."<sup>38</sup> In his article, "Nationalism: Irony and Commitment", Eagleton writes: "Any emancipatory politics must begin with the specific, then, but must in the same gesture leave it behind."<sup>39</sup>

1. Terry Eagleton, "Towards a Critique of Political Fiction," Meanjin, 39, No. 3 (1980), 383.
2. William Empson, Seven Types of Ambiguity, Third Edition (1930; rpt. London: Chatto & Windus, 1953), p. 197.
3. See Terry Eagleton, Against the Grain: Selected Essays (London and New York: Verso, 1986), p. 55.
4. William Golding, The Hot Gates and Other Occasional Pieces (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 89.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 88.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 89.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 85.
10. Empson, p. 1.
11. Golding's statement in an interview with Nigel Forde (30 March 1989, Radio 4).
12. Mark Kinkead-Weekes & Ian Gregor, William Golding: A Critical Study (London: Faber and Faber, 1967), p. 18.
13. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 87.
14. Paul O'Flinn, Them and Us in Literature (London: Pluto Press, 1975), p. 9.
15. William Golding, A Moving Target (1982; rpt. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 177.
16. Eagleton, Against the Grain, p. 68.
17. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 191.
18. Samuel Hynes, William Golding (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), p. 6.
19. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 200.
20. Eagleton, Against the Grain, p. 28.

21. Ibid., p. 32.
22. Peter Moss, "Alec Albert Golding: 1876-1957," in John Carey, ed., William Golding: The Man and his Books (London: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 17.
23. Roland Barthes, Mythologies, trans. Annette Lavers (Great Britain: Jonathan Cape, 1972), p. 103.
24. Terry Eagleton, Myths of Power: A Marxist Study of the Brontes, Second Edition (London: Macmillan Press, 1988), p. 5.
25. Moss, p. 17.
26. Ibid., p. 20.
27. Ibid., p. 21.
28. W. Eugene Davis, "Mr. Golding's Optical Delusion," English Language Notes, 3 (Dec. 1965), 126.
29. John Carey, William Golding: The Man and his Books, p. 171.
30. V.V. Subbarao, William Golding: A Study, (London: Oriental Univ. Press, 1987), p. 2.
31. Quoted by Terry Eagleton, Marxism and Literary Criticism (1976; rpt. London: Methuen, 1987), p. 4.
32. Quoted by Terry Eagleton, Against the Grain, p. 193.
33. Frederick Engels, Anti-Duhring (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1976), p. 343.
34. David Spitz, "Power and Authority: An Interpretation of Golding's Lord of the Flies," Antioch Review, 30 (1970/1971), 29.
35. O'Flinn, p. 8.
36. Ibid., p. 10.
37. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 94.
38. Quoted by Terry Eagleton in Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson and Edward W. Said, Nationalism.

Colonialism, and Literature (Minneapolis: Univ. of  
Minnesota, 1990), p. 23.

39. Ibid., p. 30.

### Chapter Three

#### Pincher Martin: The Defeated Victor

"To deprive the bourgeoisie not of its art but of its concept of art, this is the precondition of a revolutionary argument." (Pierre Macherey)

"Literary works are not mysteriously inspired, or explicable simply in terms of their authors' psychology." (Terry Eagleton)

#### Categorisation of the Novel:

Perhaps the best way to describe Golding's Pincher Martin (1956) is to say metaphorically that Pincher Martin is Golding's *enfant terrible*. Like Golding's Lord of the Flies, Pincher Martin treats of the same subject: the status of the individual in society. However, there are certain things in the latter novel which make any "normal" critique of this fictional work rather difficult. To begin with, there is too much of Golding the man and the philosopher in the novel than Golding the writer of fiction. In fact, Golding personalises the attack on his own character so intensely that a feeling of sympathy towards Pincher Martin on the reader's part comes to be seen as an almost inevitable sympathetic readerly reaction. Almost total exhaustion of the reader's emotions is required in order to finish a novel which shows nothing but a complete condemnation of its own hero

without a single flicker of hope. Golding does not hide his feelings about Pincher Martin: "In fact, I went out of my way to damn Pincher as much as I could by making him ... the nastiest type I could think of...."<sup>3</sup> However, since the book seems to be about Pincher Martin, and as Golding tried his best to make Martin the nastiest type he could think of, the slightest hint that Golding's own implication of an alternative to that type might be mystificatory would probably generate a heated argument about the novel. We shall see later that Golding's ultimate attempt to damn Pincher Martin seems to be the same attempt which paradoxically wrests the reader's admiration for the way his own character seems to reveal the value of thought.

Martin thinks that he is intelligent and that intelligence is what differentiates human beings from animals: "I am intelligent" (p. 32) and "The solution lies in intelligence. That is what distinguishes us from the helpless animals that are caught in their patterns of behaviour, both mental and physical." (pp. 173-74) But Golding tries his best as the novel shows to prove that Martin is both unintelligent and greedy. Golding cannot convincingly associate "real" intelligence with a character whose "past" he wants to portray as a record of different attempts of rape, murder, fornication, destruction of friends, and as an embodiment of a most destructive sin, namely, the sin of greed. What Golding

seems to want to portray in Pincher Martin is a damned, unintelligent, greedy character. But Martin seems to know about Greek mythological figures such as Ajax and Prometheus. He even identifies himself with both these mythical Titans. In addition to being an "amateur" actor, Martin shows some interest in classical music. On page 164, Martin is reminded of the background music, snatches of Tchaikovsky, Wagner and Holst. Moreover, Martin's thinking on the rock seems to be sound and, one can argue, intelligent. It is only at the end of the novel that Martin falls victim to hallucinations which seem to be the result of isolation and the lack of food. In other words, Martin as a character seems to possess nothing less than an "ordinary" intelligence.

However, proving Martin's intelligence or unintelligence is not quite the point in Pincher Martin. The significance lies in the related issue about the clear contradiction caused by Martin's attempt to use his faculty of thinking to the best of his ability. This relates directly to his greed. Martin declares that he is precious and that he is intelligent. He also wants to hang on to life at whatever costs. Therefore, it is only reasonable to suggest, because of his tenacious will to live, that Martin would do everything in his power to relinquish whatever it is that would cause his downfall. The story itself helps to confirm this suggestion. Life is more important than death to Martin. If the transformation

from a greedy character into a character which is not greedy would "really" save Martin from death, it is reasonable to suggest, on the evidence from the novel, that Martin will accept this transformation. Golding makes it absolutely clear that the problem for Pincher Martin is greed. On page 119, we have the summary of the whole theme: "Chris-Greed. Greed-Chris. Know each other." But it is also clear from this same passage in the novel that Martin knows that the others think of him as a greedy character, yet he does not seem to be convinced that the solution lies primarily in getting rid of this greed. We have already seen Martin declare that the solution lies in intelligence. It is precisely at this point that the bifurcation of a certain contradiction in the novel is displayed.

Pincher Martin is involved in a contradiction caused by his greed and explored in a most appropriate image of the maggots while the text displays another contradiction explored through another image of the black lightning, or alternatively, the image of the immoveable feet of God. The thrust of the novel is summarised in an implicit warning: either Martin acquiesces to Nat's advice or he dies. But although Martin does die at the end of the novel, the problem of greed is exposed, through the tenacity of this character, for what it really is, namely, a political problem rather than a religious one. If the problem of Martin's greed cannot be solved, and

solved it must be before he can live harmoniously, except by believing in God and accepting the technique of dying into heaven as the only way, then surely what seems to be a representation of human resistance in the character of Pincher Martin is faced with an authoritarian, superhuman power.

In this chapter, I will analyse the following contradiction through two images: the kinetic image of the everlastingly changing maggots and the static image of the never changing black lightning. The contradiction explored in the text can be summarised as "the immobile mobility of the system." "This internally contradictory image, of motion held within stasis or stasis accommodating motion,"<sup>4</sup> to use the Eagletonian phraseology, is indeed something which crystallises near the end of the novel. Martin faces this contradiction in his persistent attempt to possess everything around him even other characters. But the "permanent" result of this attempt seems to be the permanent threat that what he possesses is always and already not in his possession. This threat is created precisely by the possibility of dying. Therefore, Martin is in a contradictory position where the bigger he becomes the smaller he is, simply because there is always a bigger force or a bigger maggot to eat him. The text creates arguably the most vivid image in Golding's fiction. On pages 135 and 136, a dialogue is opened up about a Chinese dish:

"We maggots are there all the week. Y'see when the Chinese want to prepare a very rare dish they bury a fish in a tin box. Presently all the lill' maggots peep out and start to eat. Presently no fish. Only maggots. It's no bloody joke being a maggot. Some of 'em are phototropic. Hey, George\_\_phototropic!"

"What of it, Pete?"

"Phototropic. I said phototropic, miss."

"Finish your maggots, Pete and let's go."

"Oh, the maggots. Yes, the maggots. They haven't finished yet. Only got to the fish. It's a lousy job crawling round the inside of a tin box and Denmark's one of the worst. Well, when they've finished the fish, Chris, they start on each other."

"Cheerful thought, old man."

"The little ones eat the tiny ones. The middle-sized ones eat the little ones. The big ones eat the middle-sized ones. Then the big ones eat each other. Then there are two and then one and where there was a fish there is now one huge, successful maggot. Rare dish."

...

"Chinese dig it up\_\_"

For Christ's sake, stop shouting. We'll have a copper after us."

"Chinese dig it up\_\_"

Snap out of it, Pete. How the hell do the Chinese know when to dig it up?"

"They know. They got X-ray eyes. Have you ever heard a spade knocking on the side of a tin box, Chris? Boom! Boom! Just like thunder. You a member?"

The last section of this dialogue indicates the presence of another agency (power) which is always ready to open the buried tin box in order to get the biggest maggot. It is in this ever existing possibility of eating the biggest maggot that Chris's hopelessness lies. However big a maggot he might become, there is always the possibility that another power will come with the spade to knock at the side of the tin box. The main speaker in this dialogue is Pete, the producer. His interlocutors are George, the director, and Chris, the actor. We know from

the text that Martin manages to seduce Peter's wife, Helen. There is also the scene of the motorbike race in which Martin tries to injure Pete's leg. In the above scene, Pete is drunk. However, his story about the Chinese rare dish is aimed directly although unconsciously at Martin. Later on, Martin will encounter the black lightning which is foreshadowed in Pete's conversation. And it is precisely the image of the bigger maggot which comes to Chris's mind while he is stranded on the rock:

Up stage. Up stage. Up stage. I'm a bigger maggot than you are. You can't get any further up stage because of the table, but I can go all the way up to the french window. (p. 153)

What we are up against in this novel is the concept of Individualism. What is most important to Martin is the possession of things and the success hinted at above in the image of big successful maggots. But in order for Martin to achieve this, he must necessarily encounter resistance from the other maggots which are trying to eat each other and be successful. In other words, what we are up against is destructive Individualism. To show how destructive this type of individualism is, Golding thrusts his character in the middle of the ocean with its record of wicked past recollections and creates very powerful images which later engulf Martin and reduce him to nothingness. This is precisely what happens at the end of the novel:

There was nothing but the centre and the claws. They were huge and strong and inflamed to red. They closed on each other. They contracted. They were outlined like a night sign against the absolute nothingness and they gripped their whole strength into each other. The serrations of the claws broke. They were lambent and real and locked. (p. 201)

If Jack seems to get away with murder at the end of Lord of the Flies, Pincher Martin meets with a cruel condition, death encompassing life. An individualist who displays the most courageous fight for life ends up entombed in the most dreadful of all images, the image of the overwhelming sea. It is in this way that Martin embodies the contradiction of "the immobile mobility". The sheer energy that Martin is equipped with is amazing. Time and again, the narrative emphasises the "fact" that Martin's will is indestructible. From the fifth chapter onwards, Martin starts to confirm this will: "I shall live!" (p. 69) Even in the eleventh chapter, he seems to be convinced that he has won the battle against death. It is in this resistance to death that Martin seems to win the reader's admiration and sympathy in spite of all the wrong he does:

"Everything is predictable. I knew I shouldn't drown and I didn't. There was a rock. I knew I could live on it and I have. I have defeated the serpent in my body. I knew I should suffer and I have. But I am winning. There is a certain sense in which life begins anew now, for all the blotting-paper and the pressure." (p. 166)

The most significant feature in this passage is the treatment of the temporal aspect. Martin knew something, but he has done something about it, and now he is engaged in winning the battle. With this oratorical language, the text shifts the reader's sympathy towards Martin. The reader is no longer interested in Martin's past since he admits that he knew all those things while still insisting on winning. Noticing that Martin admits that he should suffer and that he has suffered, the reader shifts the balance of judgement in his favour. In the reader's eye who is following Martin's present movement on the rock, his tenacious, fighting spirit is a source of admiration which seems to overwhelm the feeling of disgust that the reader might have about those recollections of a wicked past. Martin uses the past tense only to make sure that he has surpassed it in his present engagement towards winning in the future. But surely there is no such real person called Pincher Martin. What is admired by the reader is the sheer energy this character seems to display. But it is this mobilized energy itself which seems to be immobile. Martin knows that: "Christopher Hadley Martin. Martin. Chris. I am what I always was!" (p. 76) As for the immobile mobility of the system, it is obvious that what the text invokes is that type of individualism which can only flourish in a capitalist system, a system which depends primarily on private ownership. But the text seems, of course, to transcend

this "vulgarisation" of the issue by its insistence on the "universal" sin of greed. But as we shall see later, the problems of greed and individualism which are vividly dramatised are not as universal as they might seem at first glance but rather distinctive features of a particularly capitalist era. But before that, let me return to the categorisation of the novel itself.

Pincher Martin, then, is a novel about individualism. And because individualism is so important to us, the novel touches a sensitive chord in our hearts. In Pincher Martin, we have the type of "personal novel" which borders on what might be called "the fiction of special pleading."<sup>5</sup> In this type of fiction we can see that only one person's feelings and needs are taken as absolute while other persons are created in these sole terms.<sup>6</sup> But although the novel fits the definition of the "personal novel", we shall see later that Pincher Martin is not that personal after all.

Pincher Martin is a miniature "monomyth" exhibiting the polymorphous progress in the life of the hero-figure, Martin, from his childhood to his death. It is a monomyth in that it portrays a "psychological" journey through different stages. But it is a monomyth in a negative sense since it is not about a hero whose example the reader is "urged" to admire and follow. The novel records Martin's experiences with him reflecting on his "selfish" past life through his flashbacks. The construction of events,

however, is to be considered in a different perspective from that which the book on the surface seems to offer. Martin drowns in the Atlantic on convoy duty and his "actual death" in the story takes place on page two (some summary books mention page twenty, but the page on which the character "actually" dies is not significant). The hero-figure remembers his past life with the "eat or be eaten" principle, and in his dying delirium imagines he is eaten himself (perhaps, ironically, by God). All that is exhibited through his flashbacks is experienced in a kind of purgatorial ordeal he undergoes. This "fact" justifies the last seemingly tricky statement in the novel uttered by Captain Davidson that "[Martin] didn't even have time to kick off his seaboots." (p. 208) Finally, the name Pincher is from the slang "pinch", to steal.

The setting of Pincher Martin is strangely a rock in the Atlantic Ocean. The action takes place during the Second World War. This is not mentioned directly in the novel, but we can certify this knowledge from the dialogue and from the description in the first chapter of the ship: "She sank out in the Atlantic. Hundreds of miles from land. She was alone, sent north-east from the convoy to break WT silence. The U-boat may be hanging round to pick up a survivor or two for questioning." (p. 17) Amid the outer turmoil symbolized by the war itself and the inner turmoil symbolized by confusion and a sense of "nothingness", manifestations of destructive tendencies

are brilliantly sketched in the characterisation of the hero-figure. A character that is gripped with the desire to dominate, possess, and compete fiercely with other rivals emerges out of the necessity to live in such a society. What the nature of that society is is quite obscured in Pincher Martin where the character is "intentionally" made to personify the fatally destructive sin of greed in isolation from society. Martin's character is delineated as "personally" shaped, his actions "personally" motivated, and his destiny and stubbornness "personally" chosen. Pincher Martin inadvertently, or perhaps consciously, leaves out of consideration the fact that what we see in the novel are manifestations of destructive tendencies in a particularly capitalist society and focuses instead on the notion of "original sin". This notion is "materialised" in the sense that Pincher Martin is born to be greedy and with the desire to grab:

"Let me make you two better acquainted. This painted bastard here takes anything he can lay his hands on. Not food, Chris, that's far too simple. He takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman. He was born with his mouth and his flies open and both hands out to grab. He's a cosmic case of the bugger who gets his penny and someone else's bun. Isn't that right, George?"

(p. 120)

The text insists that Martin is born with the sin of greed. Once again the speaker in this passage is Peter, the producer. We have already seen how Peter introduces

the image of the Chinese tin box which later contains the maggots. In the scene above, Martin is getting acquainted with the mask that he should play. It is reasonable to suggest from the long dialogue preceding this passage that Peter knows that he is a cuckold. Martin replies about the part that he is to play that: "Helen never said\_\_\_" (p. 118) Peter's own reply to this is: "What's Helen got to do with it?" (p. 118) A few lines later, he asks Martin: "What about a spot of Lechery?" (p. 119) We will see in a moment that all the things suggested in the above scene come to be materialised in the text. The memories of "past" wicked deeds come to Martin in different images. It is these images that I will explore to get to the "essence" of this character. Pincher Martin is clearly a book about a "hero" who is victimized in that balloon of egocentric self-aggrandizement, a balloon that is marooned and deflated on the rock. But the book is not only about that. Pincher Martin is an agglomeration of fragments piled together to give us a representation of tortured contemporary man, if not an exact replica. He is simply a fragmented character: "I am an album of snapshots, random, a whole show of trailers of old films." (pp. 132-33) I believe that this character is a representation of "tortured" man because it is the story of the inevitability of death in spite of the tenacious struggle to hang on to the available signs of life. The "fact" that this character is annihilated at the end with all the

struggle for survival that it exhibits is precisely what lies behind the contradictory position Martin finds himself in. His individualism is not the type of individualism that would allow other individualisms to coexist. By denying the individualism of other characters, Martin denies his own. What we are shown in the novel is almost a confirmation of the concept of "resonance" embraced by Zen Buddhism. Martin's attempt to destroy others reflects back on him.

The first pages of the novel introduce Pincher Martin struggling for survival while he is drowning in the ocean after he is thrown off the ship. He "actually" dies in a matter of seconds. But while we are made to think that Martin is rescued to the rock and is struggling to keep alive, the fact of the matter is that we are reading the flashbacks which pass through the mind of the hero-figure in the short dying delirium before he even reaches the rock. Martin is described as a person who "refuses to admit he's dead and constructs a universe of his own that's gradually taken to pieces."<sup>7</sup> This "universe of his own" is constructed in a metaphorical language which both characterizes the whole narrative and constitutes metaphorical units of which the construction of a journey is rendered possible. This journey begins with the metaphor of a new birth and ends with the metaphor of creation: "The cleft narrowed until his head projected through an opening, not much wider than his body. He got

his elbows jammed on either side and looked up." (p. 34) E.C. Bufkin rightly observes in this connection that "Martin's climb up the rock from the watery tomb-womb is described in terms of physical birth. Before beginning his journey, which is through a vaginal "cleft" in the rock, he is in a "crouched" fetal position; and his egress from the cleft is an exact parallel to a baby's leaving the womb."<sup>26</sup> The journey continues through the childhood stage represented by the "cellar" metaphor. There is the implication here that Martin turns away from God and that this leaves only a kind of darkness in that place, a fearful darkness.<sup>27</sup> The third stage is that of manhood where the introduction into the novel of a comparatively "saintly" figure, Nathaniel Walteson, becomes clear. (We will see later Nathaniel's exact position in the novel). It must be stressed that these stages are not neatly organized in the novel as might be intimated here. The penultimate stage is Martin's last attempt which takes the shape of an anthropomorphosis of his God: "On the sixth day he created God.... In his own image created he him." (p. 196) The final stage is madness followed by the "metaphorical second death."

However, another more important structural level emerges the moment we pay attention to the "myth" symbolism in the novel. The narrative abounds with allusions to mythology, mostly Greek. The occurrence of names such as Prometheus and Ajax (p. 192) brings to the

surface a certain underlying structure of events in this narrative, the structure of "crime and punishment". The symbolism of these two particular mythological figures is significant in indicating the absence of a third more important figure, that of Zeus. This absence reflects the absence of a "governmental body" to punish these "disobedient" mythical Titans. We notice that Martin is left to suffer for his "bad deeds" and to inflict on himself his own punishment. Before I elaborate on this point, I will explain the bifurcation which is behind the argument for and against the character of Pincher Martin. In the Preface to "Prometheus Unbound", Shelley writes:

In truth, I was averse from a catastrophe so feeble as that of reconciling the Champion with the Oppressor of mankind. The moral interest of the fable, which is so powerfully sustained by the sufferings and endurance of Prometheus, would be annihilated if we could conceive of him as unsaying his high language and quailing before his successful and perfidious adversary. The only imaginary being resembling in any degree Prometheus, is Satan; and Prometheus is, in my judgement, a more poetical character than Satan, because, in addition to courage, and majesty, and firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, he is susceptible of being described as exempt from the taints of ambition, envy, revenge, and a desire for personal aggrandisement, which, in the hero of Paradise Lost, interfere with the interest.<sup>10</sup>

It is obvious that while there are certainly some taints to be deplored in Martin's character, there are still some aspects which could be admired such as his intransigent attitude towards and his firm and patient opposition to omnipotent force, God. It is also clear that

we can see God in Pincher Martin only as an oppressive means and very much in terms of the Nietzschean understanding of Him as a coarse commandment against thinking. The narrative parades Martin's dissatisfaction with a crass solution of things. If, in his persistent defiance of God and his confirmation of life rather than death, Martin comes to expose his own greed for what it is, namely, something that should find a "human" solution, then the character of Pincher Martin should be admired. It is true that Martin exposes his own greedy character, but he also indicates beyond the text itself a possible way of resolving the problem, namely, a human solution for a human problem. Martin's intransigence, although detrimental to him by causing his death, exposes a contradiction between his energetic, mobile, divergent thinking, symbolised in the ever-shifting, ever-changing maggots, and God's logocentric, static, convergent thinking, symbolized in the black lightning or in the immoveable feet of God.

Martin's refusal to die sheds light on his character. His anxiety of death is revealed on the first pages of the narrative in a feverish monologue:

Presently it will be daylight.  
 I shall see wreckage.  
 I won't die.  
 I can't die.  
 Not me\_\_\_\_  
 Precious.

It is important to notice the process of rationalization in this "dialogue" with the self. The danger of death is pushed aside through this process. Martin's "ontic" self-affirmation is threatened by non-being. Thrown out into the ocean and being cast alone in this perilous situation, the sense of individuation is acutely felt: "I am alone on a rock in the middle of the Atlantic." (p. 163) With this increase of individuation comes an increase in anxiety about death. The reassertion of the impossibility of dying reveals the sense of the increasing threat against the "precious" self: "I won't die! I won't!" (p. 17) In order to save this threatened self or being, the last resort as Martin sees it is thinking: "Think, you bloody fool, think... I am intelligent." (pp. 30, 32)

Individuation, with the implication that Martin feels his aloneness through it, is constructed as the pivotal danger through which other dangers can be glimpsed:

I could find assurances of my solidity in the bodies of other people by warmth and caresses and triumphant flesh.... [T]here were other people to describe me to myself\_\_they fell in love with me, they applauded me, they caressed this body[,] they defined it for me. There were the people I got the better of, people who disliked me, people who quarrelled with me. Here I have nothing to quarrel with. I am in danger of losing definition. (p. 132)

It is true that the linguistic aspect of this passage reveals the gap between the "self" and the "other". It is also true that the sense of separateness is developed through such words as "they", "I", and "there" and "here".

In other words, it is true that Martin manages to separate other individualisms from his own. But this recognition of the existence of other individuals who can be characters in their own right is precisely invoked so that Martin can be shown to reabsorb these other characters into his own narcissistic, incorporating self. The idea behind this recognition is that if Martin dies, other characters cannot possibly exist. They only exist to "describe me to myself", "they fell in love with me", "they applauded me", "they caressed this body", and "they defined it for me." The words "my", "me" and "myself" are repeated eight times in this passage.

Martin's obsessional monologues of death reveal part of his character: "... sleep was a consenting to die, to go into complete unconsciousness, the personality defeated ..." (p. 91) The connection between sleep and death becomes very clear. If sleep is a consenting to die, the haunting question "Then why can't I sleep?" is justifiably understood. It is important, however, to notice the difference between anxiety in its nakedness and fear as it is revealed in the metaphors of death and sleep. "Naked anxiety" in the sense that it has no objects to be anxious about is differentiated from fear. The anxiety of death indicates the threat against the "precious" self. It implies the annihilation of the self with no objects to fight against. In the "cellar" metaphor, naked anxiety is transformed into fear of certain things that Martin

enumerates and tries to combat. In this sense much of his mental activity is transformed into rationalization whereby the unknown reasons of many incidents and anxieties become or seem to become knowable.

To have a fuller picture of the sense of anxiety that this character demonstrates, it is significant to trace its fear in the vicious circle which begins with the tortures of childhood and closes with the attempt to create a world on its own thinking that by being a creator it could end this misery. The first stage is childhood with the image of the cellar and what it invokes of horrors:

It's like those nights when I was a kid, lying awake thinking the darkness would go on for ever. And I couldn't go back to sleep because of the dream of the whatever it was in the cellar coming out of the corner.... Everything was the night world, the other world where everything but good could happen, the world of ghosts and robbers and horrors, of things harmless in the daytime coming to life, the wardrobe, the picture in the book, the story, coffins, corpses, vampires, and always squeezing, tormenting darkness, smoke thick. (p. 138)

The reader should bear in mind Golding's mastery of psychological situations demonstrated always in what seem to be the appropriate metaphor for the situation. The first narratological strategy we notice about this passage is the long breath that the third sentence requires to be narrated. The sentence begins with the word "everything", and we notice that really everything has been crammed into one sentence. Dreadful images of horror are made to haunt

the little kid. It is obvious here that the cellar not only supports the metaphor of death invoked through such words as "night world", "ghosts", "corpses", and "coffins" but augments its meaning as well. The cellar itself becomes a coffin from which it is difficult to escape or to come to life again. The movement in the text towards concretion explains Martin's eagerness to pin down his anxiety and reduce it to fear of nameable objects such as "robbers", "wardrobe", "coffins", "corpses" and "vampires". It is noticeable how the passage begins and closes with "darkness" the anxiety of which is "tormenting". The metaphor of the cellar with its implication of darkness and the concomitant anxiety becomes the recurrent symbol of the eternal torture. The life journey as looked at retrospectively by Martin takes the path "back from the rock ... down to the cellar. And the path led back from the cellar to the rock." (p. 173) But the significance of this metaphor is not exhausted yet. It is precisely in its indication of closure that its significance lies. There is no way for this particular character, Christopher Hadley Martin, with its record of wicked deeds, to break out of this vicious circle. It is in this particular closure that the narrative points towards the concept of justice.

The darkness of the cellar is foreshadowed in the first chapter of the novel. It is closely related to the darkness of the ocean. The coffin image of enclosure is

materialized in the ocean itself which imprisons Martin in its engulfing darkness: "He stared at the darkness as he turned but there was nothing to tell him when he had completed the circle and everywhere the darkness was grainless and alike.... [T]here was only darkness lying close against the balls of the eyes." (p. 13) This is also closely connected with "the terror of blindness" (p. 12) with its Freudian implications of the castration complex and the sense of futility. Pincher Martin is certainly a macho character. These fears of the childhood stage, however, are not shown as images of horror that can be related directly or indirectly to a certain type of society. Rather they are portrayed as symbols of a persistent anxiety.

The narrative demonstrates an anxious character in Martin. Anxiety, in all its kinds, ontological, spiritual and moral, is subtly woven into a web of perplexity whereby the reader and the major character itself seem to be at a loss to give a precise description of the main aim of the life journey as portrayed in the book. The narrative, characteristically, constitutes Martin's social experiences not as ends in themselves which might show the structures of social relationships but as clues to the rather ambiguous problem of existence: "That's what it is. Ever since I met her [Mary] and she interrupted the pattern coming at random, obeying no law of life, facing me with the insoluble, unbearable problem of her existence

the acid's been chewing at my guts." (p. 103) It is not clear what precise meaning this passage is supposed to convey. But we must bear in mind Golding's own dictum from "Belief and Creativity": "The bare act of being is an outrageous improbability. Indeed and indeed I wonder at it."<sup>11</sup> However, this passage foreshadows the "unbearableness" and "insolubleness" of Martin's own existence and the solution in this book seems to lie not in intelligence but in madness.

The portrayal of such an "existentialist" character as Martin, however, is not alien to the literature of the age. David Dunbar McElroy asserts in his book Existentialism and Modern Literature that: "... it is when we turn to literature that we find inescapable proof that the existentialists are not alone in regarding man as living a desperate and perilous existence in the modern world."<sup>12</sup> The desperation and perilousness of man's existence in the modern world are portrayed vividly in Martin's "nastiest" manifestations. These manifestations are clearly constructed by the metaphors of the Chinese box, the rape scene, the race scene, and other metaphors that constitute the second stage of the protagonist's life journey.

It would be necessary to turn our attention to Martin's "social" encounters with the other characters if we want to find a perspective through which the destructive side of this character can be analysed and assessed correctly.

The technique of presenting *ficelles*, that is, "characters whose main reason for existence is to give the reader in dramatic form the kind of help he needs if he is to grasp the story"<sup>13</sup>, is done skilfully in the novel. One of these encounters is the race scene, with Peter and Martin as the main players. Martin's sadistic nature is shown in its full explosiveness. However, this scene does not show the motives behind Martin's "love" of destructiveness which itself becomes an element in his mechanism of escape. The dramatization of the race exhibits destructiveness as an end in itself:

Peter was riding behind him and they were flat out. It was his new bike under him but it was not as good as Peter's new one. If Peter got past with that new gear of his he'd be uncatchable. Peter's front wheel was overlapping his back one in a perfect position.... Don't turn, go straight on, keep going for the fraction of a second longer than he expects. Let him turn, with his overlapping wheel. Oh clever, clever, clever. My leg, Chris, my leg\_\_\_I daren't look at my leg. Oh Christ. (p. 153)

We are encouraged to think that destructiveness is shown as an end in itself because of the presence of such assertions as "clever, clever, clever". We are almost urged (bearing in mind the rest of the text) to believe that Martin destroys Peter merely because he wants to prove that he is intelligent. We have already "heard" Martin confirm his intelligence. It is in this way that the reader is made to mistrust this kind of intelligence. The text finds its own solution for this problem of

destroying others for the sake of destruction, bearing in mind again that Martin refuses to learn the technique of dying into heaven. The last two sentences in the extract are uttered by Martin about his own leg. We are shown that wherever Martin goes, even as far as an isolated rock in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean, he will still suffer for his wicked past deeds. But the text flaunts its own fissures, as it were. It betrays itself in the very act of confirming itself. The text liquidises itself, being so unrealistic about this kind of poetic justice, in the very act of solidifying itself as a text. We all know that in real life, the likes of Martin are not all likely to suffer because of their wicked deeds. Hundreds of real criminals in the real world escape the long arm of the law. Other real criminals are simply not even identified. Because of its initial attempt to furnish metaphysical reasons for certain "flaws" in human nature (we already know that man is greedy because he has to be born greedy), the text has to provide its own solutions to these problems, solutions which again seem to be metaphysical. Actually these solutions are seen to be contained in one, namely, God. Martin is asked specifically, on page 194, whether he had had enough: "Have you had enough, Christopher?" The text at once flaunts and hides its contradictions. It is clear from the text that the sin of greed inheres in Martin. But the text is totally silent about this sin of greed in the characters of Nathaniel,

Peter, George, Mary, the little boy and all the other characters. Having created a metaphysical source for this sin (Martin's greed has nothing to do with society, otherwise, it would be possible to solve it in that society), having done that, the text hastens to display its own solution by displaying the concept of poetic justice at work. Therefore, there is a schism between these manifestations of destruction which can be after all traced back to real psychosocial, political reasons and solved, and the metaphysical, unreal solution embodied in the concept of poetic justice. In other words, the text provides us with a portrayal of "real" problems only to inject into itself an "unrealistic" solution in the name of poetic justice. All these contradictions are displayed because the main cause for what happens in the text is displaced.

The treatment of Martin's sadistic nature is not confined to his encounter with Peter. Another *ficelle* is used as a technique to highlight Martin's "misdeeds". The character of Mary Lovell is sketched in two or three encounters with Martin. A whole discourse on sexuality and the balance of power between the male and the female can be opened up for discussion. But it should be emphasised that this encounter is attempted only to show the macho, destructive side of Pincher Martin. These encounters are not meant primarily as a comment on the problem of sexuality *per se*.

The desire of the male to exercise power over the female is inscribed in the text in Martin's main obsession which is domination: "By what chance, or worse[, ] what law of the universe was she set there in the road to power and success, unbreakable yet tormenting with the need to conquer and break?" (p. 149) It is incomprehensible to Martin that Mary, the female, should have power and success. His attempt at rape is symbolically an assault against Mary's "power and success". Martin's behaviour is obviously sadistic. He releases his anger and avenges himself on her. The ambiguous ending of the rape scene, however, renders it impossible to confirm whether the action of rape "actually" takes place: "Chris. Stop laughing. D'you hear? Stop it! I said stop it!" (p. 152) Whether the laughter is an indication of victorious realization of Martin's objective or mere shrill laughter of disappointment is not made clear. But Martin is left at the end as anxious and disappointed as before: "I loathe you. I never want to see you or hear of you as long as I live." (p. 152)

We can easily detect the distinctive features of the relationship between both characters as we can detect the lust for power and a tendency towards total destruction on the protagonist's side. Both Mary's resistance and Martin's reaction are at work in the following dialogue:

"Aren't you driving rather fast?"

...

"Please drive slower, Chris!"

Ty[r]le-scream, gear-whine, thrust and roar\_\_\_\_  
 "Please\_\_\_\_!"  
 Rock, sway, silk hiss of skid, scene film-flicking.  
 Power.  
 "Please! Please!"  
 "Let me, then, Now. Tonight, in the car."  
 ...  
 "I'll kill us." (p. 151)

Faced with the prospect of total loss, the only exit for Martin is to kill both Mary and himself. One can describe this fictional scene as more realistic than real scenes. In a remark about sexuality and the balance of power, David Punter has the following to say:

.... When threatened, people in power become frightened and angry; macho masculinity, at the end of its tether and facing the rise of the feminine with terror and anxiety, might indeed take the final step. Rather, so such a force might argue, that the world should cease to exist than that we should hand over our power. The end of the phallic is said to be destruction; let us, then, prove it.'<sup>4</sup>

Martin's "aesthetic" of love is built on the idea of torture instead of sensation or comfort: "Those nights of imagined copulation, when one thought not of love nor sensation nor comfort nor triumph, but of torture rather, the very rythm of the body reinforced by hissed ejaculation\_\_\_\_" (p. 149) His sadistic tendency is clearly demonstrated in his assertion of hatred towards Mary: "How can she so hold the centre of my darkness when the only real feeling I have for her is hate?" (p. 149) It is clear from the implication of this assertion and from the meaning of many other utterances that the lack of power is

the reason which lurks behind Martin's sadism: "I can't even kill her because that would be her final victory over me." (p. 103) We understand by implication, of course, that either the movement of feminism was gaining power and the assertion of power on the side of the female was becoming possible, or that Golding is trying to portray a situation where the real power of the woman is only her own femininity and sensuality and that the male, represented here by Martin, finds that his power is only confirmed by subjugation of the woman. In both cases, however, Golding does not really show the social determinants of the situation clearly. Rather he is satisfied by exhibiting the wicked side of Martin's character as the whole narrative proves.

We can have a fuller understanding of this point only when we realize that Golding postulates another world (the hereafter) for his characters. There is no way in which Golding can see his characters rewarded or punished for their deeds or misdeeds in this world, for this will certainly mean that he will have to discard his belief in God. But Golding is a believer in God. It is this belief which leads to a belief in a world beyond this world. How else could we interpret the technique of dying into heaven? It is necessary at this point to ask the following question: "Why doesn't Golding deal with social issues decisively or trace back Martin's ills to society?" The answer to this question is that Golding already thinks

that evil springs from man rather than from society. Thus he does not have to deal with political or social institutions at large if he thinks he can highlight the source of evil somewhere else. Golding believes that if every man would be responsible for his actions and if every man would stop being greedy, then the whole universe would be in a better condition. But we know from real life that there were thousands and perhaps millions of poor men and women who lived and died without being greedy and without even having a say in how society should be run, yet their society was not necessarily better than other societies. This brings us back to the fact that there are particular individuals who hold the rein of power and who might be corrupt. It is these individuals who might be responsible for destroying their society. The solution, however, does not reside merely in removing such individuals who abuse power since corruption is not restricted to them but rather pervades the whole society in a very complicated manner. society should always be seen and defined in terms of relations rather than in terms of separate individuals who, of course, ultimately constitute that particular society. Things cannot simply be seen in black and white. Golding's attempt to make Pincher Martin the nastiest type aggravates the problem rather than "justifies" his rage against such a character. Part of the problem in Pincher Martin lies in the fact that neither Golding nor his character sees power and

evil beyond the individual limit. That is precisely why Golding thinks that all things will be back to normal once the likes of this character are out of the way, and that is also why Martin himself goes mad at the end since he feels "instinctively" that what is happening is beyond his understanding. Golding's conversation with James R. Baker will throw some light on this issue:

BAKER: But, like all of us, Pincher Martin is an egotist. He wants to hold onto his own creation, his own created world.

GOLDING: He's more of an egotist than most, isn't he?

BAKER: But that egoism has to be purged before he's able to face the larger cosmos outside of his own mind.

GOLDING: Yes, but it never is purged, is it? Because he's left with those two claws that won't let go and maybe they'll be worn away in time; I wouldn't, couldn't answer that question.'<sup>5</sup>

It is obvious that James R. Baker is wrong in thinking that all of us are like Pincher Martin. I quote this conversation to show how the "real" nihilism at the end of the novel is not really understood either by Golding or by his character. Moreover, the relation between the real author and his fictional character is already an aggressive one, generating a feeling that Golding treats Pincher Martin as if he were a real person.

Albert Camus, the French novelist, was certainly familiar not only with the historical nihilism but also with the "fictional" one. In his novel, The Outsider, he portrays a character which commits a murder. The theme that shines out of this book is the absurdity of life or

maybe nihilism itself. In his afterword to the book on 8 January 1955, Camus writes:

So one wouldn't be far wrong in seeing The Outsider as the story of a man who, without any heroic pretensions, agrees to die for the truth. I also once said, and again paradoxically, that I tried to make my character represent the only Christ that we deserve. It will be understood, after these explanations, that I said it without any intention of blasphemy but simply with the somewhat ironic affection that an artist has a right to feel towards the characters he has created.<sup>16</sup>

The most important word in this passage, I believe, is the word "paradoxically". For Golding, it would be absolutely outrageous for Mersault, Camus' character, to represent the only Christ we deserve. Mersault turns into a murderer. It is obvious that the French understanding of fictional characters is generally different from the British one. Even the French concept of writing itself seems to be different. However, this is not to say that the French understanding of things is "better" or "worse", but it means that what could be considered as an urgently moral issue for the British might in France be treated outside the bounds of morality altogether. Camus talks about the somewhat ironic affection that an artist feels for his characters. But in Pincher Martin, Golding made it clear that Pincher Martin is there for condemnation, yet it seems that there are things which might be even admired about the character of Pincher Martin.

One of the problems which Golding faces is that Martin is not placed within society but on a rock where his first understandable attempt is to survive. His nasty habits are not enacted on the rock since there is nobody there to enact them with. They are only recollections of past actions. What we see on the rock is a genuinely heroic and intelligent effort to survive. Thus while we are made to feel that Martin is really a bad character through his recollections, we are simultaneously "invited" by the vivid description of his efforts for survival to admire him. Therefore, it is the reader who is caught in the struggle to survive what seems to be "the loss of meaning" and the "nihilism" in the novel. And it is the reader again who must "resolve" (understand) this contradiction by returning it to its root.

The contradiction as I have suggested earlier revolves around Martin's continuous effort to plan things intelligently and to fight the blotting-paper and the pressure. Martin is faced with failure wherever he turns. A contradiction is explored here where the more Martin uses his reasoning powers the more he recedes into darkness. Golding explores the contradictions of an ideology that believes in "progress" by trusting in its own version of rational thinking. Martin's first reaction is to "Think." (p. 31) But although this ideology is explored and its understanding of rationalism is exposed for what it is, namely, rationalism that leads to

domination rather than freedom, Golding wages his own war against all kinds of rationalism. And it is here that he encounters a contradiction. It is obvious that thought can lead us somewhere. In Lord of the Flies, Ralph's only wish is to think like Piggy: "... thought was a valuable thing, that got results.... Only, decided Ralph as he faced the chief's seat, I can't think. Not like Piggy." (p. 85) But Martin can think. This is precisely the point where the other contradiction is created in the text. On the rock, Martin's "consciousness" is invaded by the black lightning. It is obvious that this black lightning is static in the sense that it never changes. It is always lightning and it is always black. The maggots, by contrast, are always changing, getting smaller by getting bigger. A maggot gets bigger by eating another maggot, but that same maggot is smaller when it is eaten by bigger maggots. One can think here of an analogy between these maggots and linguistic signifiers that can displace, redouble and stand in for each other in a potentially infinite chain. The black lightning signifies, in turn, an ideology which assumes a secure hierarchy of meanings, organized around some privileged set of transcendental signifiers that close it upon itself, signifiers that, in Pincher Martin, are transfixed in "the immovable, black feet." (p. 196) I borrow these two metaphors of ideology and signifiers from Eagleton's "Text, Ideology, Realism".

Talking about Pincher Martin, Golding told James R. Baker that: "Man, unless he is prevented somehow, will turn away from God."<sup>17</sup> It is clear from the beginning that Pincher Martin is driven in the text to face the "inevitable" black lightning which can conveniently be replaced by God. Pincher Martin is ultimately about a ferocious fight between Pincher Martin and God:

"I prefer it. You gave me the power to choose and all my life you led me carefully to this suffering because my choice was my own. Oh yes! I understand the pattern. All my life, whatever I had done I should have found myself in the end on that same bridge, at that same time, giving that same order—the right order, the wrong order. Yet, suppose I climbed away from the cellar over the bodies of used and defeated people, broke them to make steps on the road away from you, why should you torture me? If I ate them, who gave me a mouth?"

"There is no answer in your vocabulary."

He squatted back and glared up at the face. He shouted.

"I have considered. I prefer it, pain and all."

"To what?"

He began to rage weakly and strike out at the boots.

"To the black lightning! Go back! Go back!" (p. 197)

The pronoun "it" in the first sentence refers to Martin's own heaven, a heaven that he creates himself. On page 200, Martin tells God: "I shit on your heaven!" In this passage, Martin calls the claim that man is free to choose into question. He argues that he cannot be given a mouth and at the same time be told what to do with it. What he seems to be questioning is the genuineness of that claim about freedom which seems to be given away with one hand only to be snatched back with the other. In other

words, if man is given freedom, it should be man himself who decides what to do with it. Martin's tenacity calls into question the two philosophical doctrines of teleology and determinism, the first by exposing the pointlessness of it all if what he faces should be the case and the second by challenging it and by doing what he wants to do even at the expense of his own life. The argument at the end of Pincher Martin really becomes Philosophy. It is precisely this transformation in the text from focusing on the recollections of past events in the life of the nastiest character to focusing on the way of salvation which is behind different estimations of this character. And because Martin seems to be hopeless, Golding faces him with a merciless God represented, of course, in the image of the black lightning:

The lightning crept in. The centre was unaware of anything but the claws and the threat. It focused its awareness on the crumbled serrations and the blazing red. The lightning came forward. Some of the lines pointed to the centre, waiting for the moment when they could pierce it. Others lay against the claws, playing over them, prying for a weakness, wearing them away in a compassion that was timeless and without mercy. (p. 201)

The first thing we might notice about this passage is what could be seen as a possible contradiction implied in the compassion which is without mercy. What kind of compassion would that be which is without mercy? But Golding explains the situation in his own way: "Eternity is far, far too long. I think any really merciful God

would destroy painlessly, let us hope, creatures who've had seventy or eighty years of it, or whatever you get, because for that creature to be endlessly extended is pointless."<sup>16</sup> But the God of the above passage is obviously without mercy.

Pincher Martin encounters Nathaniel Walteson, a character which is interested in the technique of dying into heaven and which wants to teach that to Martin. But Martin is an incarnation of the twentieth-century tortured, hopeless man. Nowhere in the text can we detect a hint of contrition, simply because Martin is a representation not of the guilty man but of the angry man. Rather we detect a nonchalant attitude towards Nathaniel's lesson of "the technique of dying into heaven." (p. 71) Martin certainly represents the opposite of this mystification where the only thing to do is to acquiesce to the unknown power. His tenacity and his "scientific" attitude are unshaken till the end where he stands "face to face" with the ultimate power itself, God. Martin's attitude represents by his negation a rejection of acquiescence and mystification:

"There's a connection between us. Something will happen to us or perhaps we were meant to work together. You have an extraordinary capacity to endure."

"To what end?"

"To achieve heaven."

"Negation?"

"The technique of dying into heaven."

"No thanks. Be your age, Nat."

(p. 71)

This dialogue uncovers two important features: Martin's capacity to endure and his suggestion of "negation". The first feature is clearly demonstrated in his struggle on the rock, while the second is exhibited in his rejection of God's heaven.

Against the annihilating power of the rock, Martin mobilizes\_remember the contradiction of immobile mobility\_ all his intelligence: "The solution lies in intelligence...." (p. 173) But even intelligence and education are made redundant in Martin's world. His excessive suffering is made significant in being twofold. It is the "suffering" of a character whose rapaciousness is never satiated, and whose intelligence and education are made worthless because the ultimate end is nothingness. The fact that Martin knows that what he has done is wrong is declared on page 181: "I'm so alone! Christ! I'm so alone! Black.... The centre was thinking\_\_\_ I am so alone; so alone!.... Because of what I did I am an outsider and alone.... I am so alone. I am so alone!.... Now there is no hope. There is nothing." (p. 181)

One reason why it is difficult to understand Martin's character completely is the fact that Golding never makes it clear what he is battling against. The reader's sympathy and understanding are disrupted by the fact that what Martin represents here is not one individual or one type of personality but a host of different preoccupations which are sometimes self-contradictory as we have seen.

The love-hate attitude which Martin holds towards Nathaniel is puzzling. The cry uttered by Martin on the rock in chapter 4 is significantly repeated in chapter 7 and in both situations, he happens to be thinking of Nat:

He seized the binnacle and the rock and cried out in anguish of frustration.  
 "Can't anyone understand how I feel?" (p. 55)

But in chapter 7 the inner conflict is made obvious:

The corrosive swamped him. A voice cried out in his belly\_\_\_I do not want him to die! The sorrow and the hate bit deep, went on biting. He cried out with his proper voice.  
 "Does no one understand how I feel?" (p. 105)

This inner conflict reflects an uncertainty which goes far beyond the sphere of two characters posited against each other. The reader must bear in mind two things. First, Martin "drowns" in the Atlantic during the war. Secondly, his attempt to murder Nat also takes place while both characters are on duty during the war. Martin comes to love and hate Nat at the same time. The following words precede the first of the two passages above: "And curse the bloody Navy and the bloody war." (p. 51) We are reminded here of the relationship between Jack and Ralph in Lord of the Flies: "They looked at each other, baffled, in love and hate." (p. 60) Again the war constitutes the background here. It could be argued that the ambivalent feelings of love and hate reflect similar ambivalent feelings about the war and about science because of the

war. We know that a country which has nuclear weapons can deter attacks against it, yet it is possible that those same weapons can destroy other countries as was the case between Japan and America during the Second World War which constitutes the backdrop to the novel. But these weapons were made with the help of scientists who thought they were extending their services to humanity. Thus it seems that science can generate ambivalent feelings. Golding himself is known to have his doubts about the extent to which science can help create a happy world.

Martin's ambivalent feelings about Nat cannot be taken only as a reaction against Nat's "rivalry" for Mary:

Then he found himself additionally furious with Nathaniel, not because of Mary, not because he had happened on her as he might have tripped over a ring-bolt but because he dared sit so, tilting with the sea, held by a thread, so near the end that would be at once so anguishing and restful like the bursting of a boil. (p. 101)

Obscurity extends in Pincher Martin to the protagonist's "actions" themselves. The premeditated crime which haunts Martin's imagination is left vague, and his suffering does not seem to be the consequence of guilt. Martin's anxiety is associated more with determinism whereby human actions are rendered worthless, a determinism that is fatally destructive. In his own confusion, Martin is left, as we have seen earlier, to create his own heaven which he prefers to that of God. A sense of nihilism is created. One can argue that this

nihilism is behind Martin's madness. The feeling of nihilism comes out more in circumstances where there are chances of individuation. Martin's feeling of alienation is also intense when he is separated on the rock: "Think of it! All you people in warm beds, a British sailor isolated on a rock and going mad not because he wants to but because the sea is a terror\_\_\_ the worst terror there is, the worst imaginable." (p. 187) It might be that Martin sees the sea as the unconscious which he is made to explore but which at the same time proves terrifying to him. But whatever the case is, it is obvious that if Martin is meant to suffer by making him face the sea, then this textual strategy\_ Martin on the rock facing the people out there\_ seems to elicit the reader's sympathy rather than her conviction that justice has been achieved. There is a clear conflict between the main purpose behind the text\_ isolating Martin on the rock to try him\_ and the actual result of reading the text\_ a sympathetic attitude towards his suffering. Moreover, the preoccupations of this character gradually seem to reflect some of those of the real world in the '40s and '50s.

Although it is clear that the anxiety of death is ontologically important in the sense that Martin's being is threatened by non-being, it is still significant to trace another kind of anxiety, the spiritual anxiety, as it is demonstrated on another level of importance. The spiritual anxiety in the sense that it is an anxiety of

emptiness and meaninglessness is textually signified throughout the narrative. The creation of God, the last "creative" attempt on the part of the hero-figure, is itself symbolically nullified. Martin's attempts to create or even to live meaningfully are demonstrated as futile. The desire to create is stated very clearly: "Education, a key to all patterns, itself able to improve them, to create." (p. 163)

It could be argued then that Pincher Martin is not only about the nastiest type of character that William Golding could think of. Pincher Martin is clearly a rejection of the ideology of domination. It is obvious that greed is one of the elements which are built into this ideology, an ideology that destroys true individualism in its search for nothing less than individualism itself. Martin's destructive individualism, the text proves, should be destroyed. But another ideology which is as destructive as Martin's is created to combat it. The mystificatory ideology of what we can call metaphorically "the immovable, black feet", or an ideology that can be sustained only by the image of the black lightning is certainly another destructive ideology. What we have in Pincher Martin is an "alliance" of two "textual" ideologies that can be recognised as siblings. Pincher Martin cannot be saved by depriving him of the only means which can truly save him. To deprive a subject of its own reasoning powers is to have no subject at all. It is

obvious that one cannot combat a certain ideology by destroying a subject which happens to believe in that ideology. A procedure which aims at reforming a destructive individualist by sacrificing that same individualist is certainly pointless and futile. It is precisely at this point that the text has to create its second ideology to sustain its own textuality. The coherence of the text, that which makes it a text in the first place, is the clash of contradictory ideologies. But it is obvious that both ideologies are destructive, the first by its proliferation of maggots which live on each other and the second by assuming a metaphysical hierarchy of meanings that cannot afford any kind of questioning. And again it is at this point that we can benefit a lot if we take Macherey's advice seriously. One can argue that to deprive the bourgeoisie not of its individualism but of its concept of individualism, this is the precondition of a revolutionary argument.

In his article, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", Oscar Wilde answers a question that he himself asks about individualism:

But it may be asked how Individualism, which is now more or less dependent on the existence of private property for its development, will benefit by the abolition of such private property. The answer is very simple.... It will benefit in this way. Under the new conditions Individualism will be far freer, far finer, and far more intensified than it is now.... The true perfection of man lies, not in what man has, but in what man is. Private property has crushed true Individualism, and set up an Individualism that is false. It has debarred one part of the community from

being individual by starving them. It has debarred the other part of the community from being individual by putting them on the wrong road, and encumbering them.<sup>19</sup>

Wilde concentrates on the two parts of the community. He makes it clear that individualism can only exist within a society. In Pincher Martin, we have a character which has been ousted from society altogether. It is pointless for Martin even to acquiesce to the power of the black lightning and thus be seen as repentant, as he no longer belongs to society. He is a character stranded on a rock. The argument of the novel itself would collapse if Martin accepts to learn the technique of dying into heaven. Golding makes it absolutely clear that: "Nathaniel is a mechanism, a plot mechanism. He's got to be there for Pincher to bounce off of, really, more than any thing else."<sup>20</sup> But if Martin turns into another Nathaniel by learning the technique of dying into heaven, it would be obvious that Martin himself would turn into a plot mechanism rather than into a character which can distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. In other words, Martin would turn into a thoughtless character. It is this insistence on the transformation of Martin's character which reveals the second textual ideology for what it really is, that is, an attempt to blur the border between an intransigent character which believes in the value of thought and a plot mechanism which is left to "meet his aeons." (p. 50) Michael Quinn

once declared that: "William Golding's Pincher Martin is a painful book to read; some, I suspect, may have found it unreadable."<sup>21</sup>

This suggestion that some readers may have found the book unreadable bears witness to the fact that Pincher Martin cannot simply be about a character. What does not emerge in the text is an emancipatory politics. Not that it should provide such politics, but it is obvious that Golding emphasises his desire that humanity be emancipated from domination or in other words from destructive individualism. But as Terry Eagleton once said: "Any emancipatory politics must begin with the specific, then, but must in the same gesture leave it behind.... Ironically, then, a politics of difference or specificity is in the first place in the cause of sameness and universal identity."<sup>22</sup> But while the hero's fragmentation reflects genuinely the spirit of the age, the author's anger is aimed at the sin of greed itself rather than against any specific ideological closure which is the cause of that greed in the first place. However, despite its destructive individualism, the character of Pincher Martin still indicates, although not so to Golding, from within the text a way towards a possible solution:

"I am busy surviving. I am netting down this rock with names and taming it. Some people would be incapable of understanding the importance of that. What is given a name is given a seal, a chain. If this rock tries to adapt me to its ways I will refuse and adapt it to mine. I will impose my routine on it, my geography. I will tie it down with names. If it tries to annihilate

me with blotting-paper, then I will speak in here where my words resound and significant sounds assure me of my own identity. I will trap rainwater and add it to this pool. I will use my brain as a delicate machine-tool to produce the results I want. Comfort. Safety. Rescue. Therefore to-morrow I declare to be a thinking day." (pp. 86-87)

It is almost impossible to prevent a mental association, on the basis of this "philosophical" piece, between this fictional character and Marx had it not been for the unpleasant associations which the rest of the text ties this character with. Martin even identifies himself with Prometheus: "I am Atlas. I am Prometheus." (p. 164) Marx also was compared to Prometheus: "Marx's scientific achievements are unmatched in the long history of social thought. Even as a young man he was compared with Prometheus, who stole fire from the gods to help man escape from hunger, cold and darkness, and who is said to have given mankind the arts and sciences." What we see in the above passage from Pincher Martin is a bold, materialist philosophy, a philosophy that believes in the human brain rather than in the mystificatory aeons of a Nathaniel Walteson or a pair of black, immoveable feet. For the first time in the text, Martin reveals a genuine possibility of arresting that dreadful, potentially infinite chain of proliferating maggots/signifiers even by violence. But Martin devises a better way, that is, the use of his brain to produce comfort, safety and rescue. He specifically and courageously declares the following day

to be a thinking day. This passage reveals Martin as a character that stands for the future, the value of thought, the capacity to secure the means of comfort and safety and to secure a hierarchy of meanings that is unashamedly physical and material rather than metaphysical. Martin rejects the black lightning. Although this character is a descendent of the destructive ideology of domination, our desire should be to deprive such a character of its concept of individualism rather than of its own individualism. For critics to brand Pincher Martin a Morality Play is certainly to stultify the many important issues that this novel engages its readers in. E.C. Bufkin entitles his article about the novel, "Pincher Martin: William Golding's Morality Play." For Pincher Martin to be judged as a "Morality Play" is to dismiss it or evaluate it only as a treatise on greed and some other sins. The issue is more complicated than that, and the whole critical judgement depends on the kind of value-judgement we have.

#### **Value-Judgements and Pincher Martin:**

As the notion of human nature is understood differently when it is discussed by different people, it follows that Pincher Martin with its "specific" concentration on the "universal" sin of greed is subject to many different

critical judgements. E.C. Bufkin, as a representative of a certain camp of readers as well as critics, cites the following in judging the novel:

In an important scene Golding conjoins plot and morality pattern: he tells of Martin's having once taken part in a morality play. He was to be one of the Seven Deadly Sins. Offered his choice of "his favourite sin," he said that he did not mind playing Sloth. But he passed over that sin and pride—which the producer said Martin could play "without a mask"—as well as Malice, Envy, and Lechery. Finally choosing Greed, Martin was told: "Darling, it's simply *you!* ... Chris-Greed. Greed-Chris. Know each other." Then follows the description of Greed:

...  
...

In this forthright passage Golding says in effect that he is depicting in Pincher Martin a "cosmic case" of a particular variety of evil and personifying it, after the manner of the moralities, in the protagonist Christopher Martin. His intention was not to create a many-sided personality but to personify "the most unpleasant, the nastiest type [he] could think of."<sup>24</sup>

The "description of Greed" which Bufkin mentions in this passage is the one where Peter acquaints Martin with the mask of greed. But what we are offered here is a drastic misreading of the whole scene. First, Martin does not pass over the sins of Malice, Envy, Pride and Lechery. Secondly, Martin does not choose Greed. He says that he does not mind playing Sloth. Thirdly, we do not know for sure that Golding's intention was not to create a many-sided personality. After all, we do have in the actual text a very complicated character in the personality of Pincher Martin and one that proves "intransigent" even to its author. Perhaps it is this intransigence which Bufkin

fails to pick up in Pincher Martin's character. But what is hard to condone is Bufkin's own understanding of the matter when he declares: "Then follows the description of Greed." How can any author, narrator, critic or reader describe Greed? Is it possible to describe an abstraction that cannot be seen or heard or smelt or touched or tasted? To be sure, one can describe a greedy person, but certainly no one can describe Greed. Here is the scene which Bufkin discusses:

".... There they are Chris, all in a row. What about it?  
 "Anything yoy (sic) say, old man."  
 "What about pride, George? He could play that without a mask and just stylized make-up, couldn't he?  
 "Look, Pete, if I'm doubling I'd sooner not make\_\_\_"  
 "Malice, George?"  
 "Envy, Pete?"  
 I don't mind playing Sloth, Pete."  
 "Not Sloth. Shall we ask Helen, Chris? I value my wife's advice."  
 "Steady, Pete."  
 "What about a spot of Lechery?"  
 Pete! Stop it."  
 ...  
 ...  
 "What's it supposed to be, old man?"  
 "Darling, it's simply you! Don't you think, George?"  
 "Definitely, old man, definitely."  
 "Chris-Greed. Greed-Chris. Know each other."  
 "Anything to please you, Pete." (pp. 119-20)

It is obvious that there is nothing in this whole scene to suggest that Martin passes over all those sins. The character which is addressed by Pete in most cases is George, not Martin. The speaker in the eighth and antepenultimate lines is not Martin but George. Only after the part is forced upon him does Martin say: "Anything to

please you." It is obvious that what happens in this scene is not a matter of choice. Martin specifically states that he does not mind playing Sloth. He needs the part:

"Well, I do think, Pete, after the amount of work I've done for you, I shouldn't be asked to\_\_\_"  
 "Double, old man? Everybody's doubling. I'm doubling. So you're wanted for the seven sins, Chris." (p. 118)

This is a clear, unequivocal dialogue between Peter and Martin. Therefore, it is difficult to see how most critics dub Martin as a greedy character without careful explanation of what they really mean. If every character which takes the best part, the best seat, the most money, the best notice, the best woman, things which the text specifies, is a greedy character, then surely the sin of greed cannot be a particularly distinctive feature to distinguish many fictional characters. Exactly at the end of this flashback on page 120, Martin comes back to his business on the rock by remembering that: "I haven't had a crap for a week." (p. 120) In his book, The Novels of William Golding, Stephen J. Boyd is at pains to show how Martin handles this problem and why he is exactly in this appalling condition:

Chris himself is convinced that much of his suffering is caused by a blockage in his bowels, by something he ate, by a build-up of filth within him, and attempts to cure this by administering to himself the enema, which has spectacularly purgative results. The enema, however, shows Chris to be still too much concerned with the physical rather than the spiritual, more concerned with body than soul. The true cause of his appalling condition is the spiritual filth of sin, the moral corruption, within Chris. <sup>25</sup>

(My emphasis)

Somewhere else in the same chapter, Boyd says: "Chris is a thief, stealing money, other men's wives, brutally attempting to force Mary into sexual intercourse. Chris entirely rejects the Christ within him in favour of the world, flesh and devil."<sup>26</sup> It is clear that Pincher Martin is taken out of the text only to be treated as if he were a real person. The only way to reform Chris, for such critics, seems to be by injecting Christ back into Chris. Other critics, however, think of other ways to criticise literary works. Macherey, for example, invites us to see how "the critic, employing a new language, brings out a *difference* within the work by demonstrating that it is *other than it is*."<sup>27</sup>

Pincher Martin is certainly a novel which genuinely portrays a fragmented character. It is without doubt a form of writing which replicates the fragmentation which is unfortunately left unquestioned. It is only in this sense that we can say that the book is not as "useful" as it could have been. To say this is not to say that we demand another Pincher Martin but simply to suggest that the contradictions which we encounter cannot be easily revealed to us with this lack of questioning:

... in a world where we are continually exposed to bits and pieces of experiences, conveyed to us at high speed through specific technological developments which largely appear to us as beyond our control, the most useful forms of writing will replicate that fragmentation at the same time as questioning it.<sup>28</sup>

The questions asked in the novel about freedom and identity and about the significance of both in society are not asked in their suitable context. Martin is an isolated character on a rock. His society is shown only in the "nicest" terms in the person of Nathaniel, the "saintly" figure, or in terms of other victims whom Martin destroys. The question to be asked here is: "How could such a decent society like the one we see in the background in the characters of Mary, Nathaniel, Peter, and the small boy produce the nastiest type Golding could think of?"

To embark on a well-organized analysis of the different preoccupations of the narrative is necessarily rather difficult for two reasons. The first concerns the structure of the book itself while the second is simply characterization which is apparently formally incoherent. I do not mean by formal incoherence that there is contradiction in characterisation as such but rather in the nature of the character itself, a split character. Pincher Martin is delineated as a contradictory character or at least that is what we detect from the text itself. However, the hero's identification with the mythological figure, Prometheus, whose name is related in mythology to the creation of man, shows him to be on the positive side of judgement. The following citation is taken from Gods and Heroes: Myths & Epics of Ancient Greece:

Now the gods in heaven, and among them Zeus, who had but lately deposed his father Cronus and established his own supremacy, began to notice this new creation, man. They were willing enough to protect him, but\_\_\_ in return\_\_\_ demanded that he pay them homage. In Mecone, in Greece, mortals and immortals met on a set day, to determine the rights and duties of man. At this assembly Prometheus appeared as man's counsel, to see to it that the gods\_\_\_ in their capacity of protectors\_\_\_ did not impose too burdensome levies upon men.<sup>23</sup>

Understanding the political implications of this passage would help us place the identification with Prometheus in the right critical frame. We can detect from this passage that Prometheus is a friend to man since he is his creator as the same book makes clear. In Pincher Martin, we have the protagonist identifying himself completely with Prometheus: "I am Prometheus." (p. 164) Another complete identification as we have seen earlier is with Atlas, another Titan compelled to support the sky on his shoulders as punishment for rebelling against Zeus. It is exactly when we look at the "hidden" parallel between the three figures, Pincher Martin, Prometheus, and Atlas that we begin to discern the "truth" behind this identification. Whether the author is consciously ironical about this parallel or ironically unconscious about its connotations is of less importance than the fact that Prometheus and Atlas are both "rebels" against Zeus, a point which constitutes the core of my argument. It is exactly the parallel with the figure of Zeus which is, perhaps dextrously, avoided so that no parallel with a

"governmental body" can emerge. In this manner, we can extract different causes for Martin's identification with these mythical Titans than the ones intended by the author. The difference lies between the critics who might differ in their understanding and Golding himself who went out of his way to damn Pincher Martin. It would be easy to see from this parallel that Pincher Martin represents a process of victimization completed unconsciously by the God-like author who uses the same symbol of the rock to punish his protagonist on. To complete this mythological symbolism the reader in turn can take the role of Heracles and release the character by trying to analyse critically the causes and the texture of society which make out of this "rebellious" character a literary possibility. The "Pincher Martin" we come across in the text is an example of a victim politically conditioned and politically condemned. I am not suggesting that this type of character should not be held responsible for its "misdeeds" but the issue as we have seen is bigger than one character can handle, and the root of evil is planted in a whole society. Martin stands for the "social whirl" (p. 182) which does not believe in lectures about "heaven". As the book itself tells us, Martin "felt himself loom, gigantic on the rock. His jaws clenched, his chin sank. He became a hero for whom the impossible was an achievement." (p. 164) This is certainly not so much a megalomaniac "raving mad" (p. 190) on a rock as a rebel fighting "the blotting-

paper" and the oppressive God. It is this rebellion which is important in Pincher Martin, and it is this rebellion which makes one think of Pincher Martin as Golding's *enfant terrible*. The paradox lies in the fact that the only character which could stand for what Golding needs, namely, the demystificatory, emancipatory thinking character, is the same one drowned in the Atlantic. But once again, Golding the realist is at his best in Pincher Martin. Golding produces a text which reveals to us that its own textual ideologies are impossible. In other words, the text's possibility lies in its impossibility.

## NOTES

1. Pierre Macherey, A Theory of Literary Production, trans. Geoffrey Wall (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978), p. vii.
2. Terry Eagleton, Marxism and Literary Criticism (1976; rpt. London: Methuen, 1987), p. 6.
3. Quoted by Samuel Hynes, William Golding (New York and London: Columbia Univ. Press, 1964), p. 32.
4. See Terry Eagleton, Against the Grain: Selected Essays (London and New York: Verso, 1986), p. 30.
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6. Ibid., pp. 284-5.
7. James R. Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," Twentieth Century Literature, 28, No. 2 (Summer 1982), 142.
8. E.C. Bufkin, "Pincher Martin: William Golding's Morality Play," Studies in Literary Imagination, 2, No. 2 (Oct. 1969), 6.
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18. Ibid., 143.
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24. Bufkin, 5-6.
25. Stephen J. Boyd, The Novels of William Golding, Second Edition (New York and London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), p. 55.
26. Ibid., p. 49.
27. Macherey, p. 7.
28. David Punter, "The Unconscious and Contemporary Culture," in Introduction to Contemporary Cultural Studies, ed. David Punter (London: Longman, 1986), p. 252.
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## Chapter Four

### Free Fall: Destructive Creativity

"Lastly I must mention a splendid picture from the original edition of this book [Round the Moon], which the publishers, to their great credit, have preserved for posterity. It is a, or rather *the*, moment of free fall\_\_\_ not the modern sort which can be endless, but the nineteenth-century sort, the point where earth and moon gravity is equal."'  
 (William Golding)

"For she might come to care for me, I said, in my bourgeois pamphlet, she might even\_\_\_for I have loved you from the first day and I always shall."  
 (Samuel Mountjoy)

Free Fall(1959), Golding's fourth novel, certainly constitutes another attempt by the author to explore imaginatively and metaphorically the depths of the human psyche. Although the hiatus between this novel and its predecessor, Pincher Martin, seems long enough for Golding to modify, if desirable, his main preoccupations, it is interesting to note his tenacity to hold on to a technique whereby the "sufferings" of one character seem to be the sole preoccupation of the whole project of writing. I use the word "writing" rather than "text" because Samuel Mountjoy, the protagonist, seems to be interested in writing rather than in producing texts. His own character, however, has to be analysed through the text of Free Fall. But although there is a similarity between the techniques of both novels in the sense which I have explained, there

is still a noticeable difference in the choice of the background for the latter novel.

It is generally granted that with Free Fall Golding begins to plunge his protagonist into a more tangible social background. However, there are still ways in which one can say that this "social background" is still, as the phrase itself significantly indicates, in the background. What is foregrounded is not a direct concern with society and its problems. Perhaps the best way to describe the novel is by saying that Free Fall is a study of the ideal/material contradiction inscribed in the character of Samuel Mountjoy in its search for a full subjectivity. Before I move on to discuss the haecceity of this contradiction, I would like to explain the title of the novel.

The most interesting point about Golding's quotation is the fact that he still shows an inclination towards what seems to be a static position. It is abundantly clear that the equality of gravity between the earth and the moon would make it difficult for the person hung in such a central position to be attracted either side. Golding makes it clear that this is a splendid picture and that the modern sort which can be endless is not what he means by the moment of free fall. But surely the immobility "generated" by the nineteenth-century sort would itself involve a moment of both relief and anguish simultaneously. The anguish concerned would probably be

the result of the loss of what is interesting about both sides, the earth and the moon, whereas relief would be the consequence of that same position where one is free precisely from that same anguish. However, Golding's admiration for this "picture" betrays a desire to see the subject (the fullness of meaning) firmly centred in the rich plethora of its linguistic presence. In other words, Golding's desire is to see the subject celebrated as the fount and origin of all sense. It is clear from the picture Golding describes that he prefers a centred subject (the point where earth and moon gravity is equal) to a decentred subject where there is an endless displacement of signifiers by other signifiers (the endless moment of free fall). But as I have mentioned earlier, the picture Golding prefers "reveals" both anguish and relief. In other words, it creates a self contradictory position.

The contradiction explored in Free Fall revolves around the endless reversibility between the moment of anguish and the moment of relief. Sometimes it becomes difficult for Mountjoy to distinguish between these two moments. This reversibility is caused by Mountjoy's inability to track his origin down: "In 1917 there were victories and defeats, there was a revolution. In face of all that, what is one little bastard more or less?" (p. 10) It is clear from this passage that Mountjoy is not likely to be searching for an origin, and consequently he is likely to

be relieved by unburdening himself of this tiresome search. But although it might seem that these words are a reassurance (to the reader) that Mountjoy is not the type of character which is interested in the search for an origin, the whole narrative constitutes an attempt to find this origin. On pages 11, 12, 13, and 14, the same question is repeated: "What was my dad, Ma?". The novel, however, ends where it begins.

Mountjoy's attempt to tie himself to an origin fails. The last sentence in the first paragraph in the novel explains the purpose behind his project of writing: "Yet I am a burning amateur, torn by the irrational and incoherent, violently searching and self-condemned." (p. 5) Samuel Mountjoy is both a writer and an artist. In this chapter I will attempt to analyse different contradictions inscribed in Mountjoy's own discourses. I will explore these contradictions in the concepts of "writing" (writer) and "creation" (artist) as understood by the protagonist. What makes it easier for us to confirm the presence of contradiction is Mountjoy's own words "searching and self-condemned." If this character is really self-condemned, there would seem to be no logic behind its continuous search.

The main contradiction which involves the writer/artist himself is nothing less than the contradiction of the materiality and idealism inscribed in the problematical structure of the linguistic sign itself. This

contradiction in Mountjoy's discourse involves the signified which seems to be only metaphysically (ideally) present and the signifier whose materiality is unashamedly paraded on the page. Mountjoy's search as writing subject is not for signifiers which are already there anyway, but rather for a signified which can be tied down in an attempt to prove that the subject behind its own writing does exist. Mountjoy, the writing subject, is himself the signified which is anxious to install itself in what is written. In other words, Mountjoy is searching for himself to establish whether he does exist as a significant signified which can be safely referred to or as another signifier which can be dangerously displaced and redoubled by any other signifier. What Mountjoy is anxious to establish through his writing is whether he is significantly different as a signified from other signifiers. But what is written is composed only of signifiers rather than signifieds. What the writing subject dreads most is the possibility of its transformation into another signifier which can be represented by another signifier in a potentially infinite chain. In other words, the writing subject is searching for a metaphysical, transcendental, privileged, autobiographical position precisely in writing whose material, flowing signifiers cannot afford to be arrested for a nostalgic look towards the past. What Mountjoy does not want to be is to be just another child, another

bastard, another unimportant signifier. But Mountjoy is already all these things as his discourse proves. The first two things he discourses upon are his childhood and bastardy. He follows that later with a description which shows him as merely another floating bubble:

I can see that time in my mind's eye if I stoop to knee height. A doorstep is the size of an altar, I can lean on the sloping sign beneath the plate-glass of a shop window, to cross the gutter is a wild leap. Then the transparency which is myself floats through life like a bubble, empty of guilt, empty of anything but immediate and conscienceless emotions, generous, greedy, cruel, innocent. My twin towers were Ma and Evie. (p. 29)

The picture begins to emerge very slowly. Mountjoy the man is anguished. His encounters with Beatrice, Nick Shales, Rowena Pringle, Philip and many other characters constitute painful experiences for him for different reasons. Mountjoy the child is clearly empty of guilt, empty of anything that would disturb its serenity and happiness:

There was no guilt but only the splash and splatter of the fountain at the centre. I had bathed and drunk and now I was sitting on the warm stone edge placidly considering what I should do next. The gravelled paths of the park radiated from me: and all at once I was overcome by a new knowledge. I could take whichever I would of these paths. There was nothing to draw me down one more than the other. I danced down one for joy in the taste of potatoes. I was free. I had chosen. (pp. 5-6)

The character of this picture is Mountjoy the child. He is free to choose. He is also free from guilt. It is very

important then to ask the question: "How did I lose my freedom?" (p. 6) If the child is happy, free, and relieved from responsibilities and if the man is anguished, restricted, and burdened with too many responsibilities, it is clear then that the moment of free fall can only constitute the gap between childhood and manhood. It is this gap which allows the character to glance backward and forward. But it is an impossible gap. The moment of the loss of innocence can only be the moment of experience. Mountjoy, in other words, is searching for an impossible moment, the moment of free fall. If the text of Free Fall is about free fall, then it is of necessity a text of contradictions. I will analyse in detail the contradictory statements in Mountjoy's discourses, discourses that prove their possibility as such only in their impossibility. The subject writes these discourses only to find out that it is engulfed and confiscated as a subject by these same discourses. In other words, what is found at the end of the text is nothing. Being critically and painfully aware of his own discourses and of the impossibility of tracking the moment of free fall (the loss of freedom questioned above) down, the writer/artist hastens to tell us that: "Living is like nothing because it is everything." (p. 7)

In analysing the text of Free Fall, I will concentrate on different contradictions explored in different passages. I will also explain the reasons for the main contradiction which is compounded in the text. The

narrative is relayed to us in the first person, "the character-narrator-I". In other words, it is the narrative of the "writing I" about the "written I". I will study this "character-narrator-I" as it is posited in confrontation with six characters: Ma, Evie, Beatrice, Philip, Nick Shales and Rowena Pringle. The characters of Ma and Evie will be analysed within the "fantastication" stage while the character of Beatrice Ifor will be looked at as a representation of "repressed" sexuality. Philip's character is significant in exhibiting the political argument of the text while the last two characters would fit into the contrasting worlds of religion and science. Amid all the plethora of different worlds and attitudes, Samuel Mountjoy has to represent the floating signifier where he, in his own contradiction, writes himself in only to write himself out.

Because it is always possible that the writing subject will itself turn into another signifier which can be washed away, Mountjoy, in his insistence to write his story, centres himself in the text only by violence and at the expense of the other characters whom he creates only to destroy. Mountjoy refuses to dwindle to a mere formal motivation of plot, but that can be managed only by inscribing in his own text all the contradictions which seem to remind him of his guilty existence. The writing subject is anxious to establish its status at once as a signified and as a signifier. It is this desire which

creates a contradiction with serious political and ideological implications. If a metaphysical, absent, ideal Subject (signified) is proven to exist, this would certainly create a hierarchy of meanings which will never admit the existence of difference at the level of materiality (signifier). What Mountjoy is in search of is precisely the security of position for the writer of those discourses that we see on the pages of Free Fall.

But if Mountjoy is to write at all, he is certain to fall into the trap of signifiers where his cherished subjectivity as writing subject would end up as another signifier (the death of the author). In other words, to communicate is at once Mountjoy's passion and despair:

Our loneliness is the loneliness of that dark thing that sees as at the atom by reflection, feels by remote control and hears only words phoned to it in a foreign tongue. To communicate is our passion and our despair. (p. 8)

By acknowledging that "our" loneliness sees by reflection, Mountjoy already (on page 8) hints at the danger which comes from proliferating signifiers which displace each other in an endless movement. That is why to communicate is at once our passion and despair. Mountjoy's only desire is to achieve fusion between the cherished signified, his own subjectivity, and the necessary evil, the signifier without which no writing is ever possible. He tells Beatrice, his own created signifier in his own discourse:

"I said I loved you. Oh God, don't you know what that means? I want you, I want all of you, not just cold kisses and walks\_\_I want to be with you and in you and on you and round you\_\_I want fusion and identity\_\_I want to understand and be understood\_\_Oh God, Beatrice, Beatrice, I love you\_\_I want to be you!"

(p. 105)

Like Pincher Martin, Mountjoy desires nothing less than a complete reabsorption of the beloved other. Beatrice's difference as another character can only be achieved in Mountjoy's sameness. In other words, Beatrice contradictorily exists only when she does not exist. Mountjoy's acrobatic dance with, in, on, and round Beatrice is one skilful performance to absorb this flamboyant signifier which threatens his "secure" position as the hidden, signified, transcendental writing subject. Mountjoy cannot really appear on the scene as just another different signifier. He needs more than that. But he needs Beatrice for his own existence. That is why Beatrice, the persistent reminder of his own contradictions, is created (a figment of his imagination while he himself is a figment of the author's imagination), chased, violated, deflowered, deserted, and finally destroyed in no where less significant than a loony bin. This is the contradiction of destructive creativity which involves the creation by a writing subject of a character that has to appear and disappear at once only for this subject to reassure itself of its own existence. It is this precarious existence, again, which reflects the political

and ideological self-contradictory position of the bourgeois subject.

Mountjoy's relationship with Beatrice is scripted in a discourse of jealousy. It is Beatrice, the signifier, who robs the writing subject of its freedom. How can Mountjoy bring out the best in Beatrice to show that she is worthy of the pursuit and at the same time write her out of his discourse to write himself in? The gaze of the reader cannot possibly be directed at both characters at once. If Beatrice is the one who is being described in the discourse, then surely it is she who is going to be noticed by the reader. Mountjoy as writing subject will have to retire into the background and slip out of his own discourse. The only way for him to sustain his subjectivity is by creating Beatrice and then destroying her. Mountjoy, the writing subject, can then convince himself that now he has found the moment of his loss of freedom. The only way to retrieve this freedom is by destroying that same agency which has robbed him of it: "And even by the time I was on the bike by the traffic light, I was no longer free.... No. I was not entirely free. Almost but not quite. For this part of London was touched by Beatrice." (p. 79) Having found a possible reason for his lost freedom, Mountjoy clings to Beatrice only to the extent that he can get it back. Beatrice cannot be loved for what she really is, but only challenged for what she already possesses:

Sitting there, I could feel all the beginnings of my wide and wild jealousy; jealousy that she was a girl, the most obscure jealousy of all—that she could take lovers and bear children, was smooth, gentle and sweet, that the hair flowered on her head, that she wore silk and scent and powder; jealousy that her French was so good because she had that fortnight in Paris with the others and I was forbidden to go—jealousy of the chapel-deep inexplicable fury with her respectable devotion and that guessed-at sense of communion: jealousy, final and complete of the people who might penetrate her goodwill, her mind, the secret treasures of her body, getting where I if I turned back could never hope to go—I began to scan the men on the pavement, these anonymities who were privileged to live in this land touched by the feet of Beatrice.

(p. 80)

The reason behind the main contradiction in this discourse begins to be revealed the moment we notice that even though those characters are anonymities (signifieds), they are still privileged (but still signifieds). For Mountjoy, an anonymous character cannot possibly be privileged. Mountjoy rehearses the fears of the bourgeois subject which wants to confirm at once its appearance on and disappearance from the scene of events. We shall see later that there are specific political and ideological reasons behind this desire. What Mountjoy desires is the simultaneous destruction of his own anonymity (to become a signifier) and attainment of privilege (to remain a signified). But as writing subject, this seems to be impossible. The word "jealousy" is repeated six times in one passage. But in this passage, only the name of Beatrice appears. The only impossible solution for Mountjoy, then, is to be at once Mountjoy and Beatrice:

"Help me. I have gone mad. Have mercy. I want to be you."  
(p. 84)

In the gradual process of eliminating Beatrice (a self-contradictory procedure because he needs her to survive as writing subject who can write about her), Mountjoy chases and pesters her until she submits to his desires. Towards this aim, Mountjoy uses his own techniques, psychological manoeuvres which he knows will succeed: "I was a local and specialized psychologist." (p. 88) Mountjoy's hidden desires are betrayed in his own discourse. The unsexual love with which he showers Beatrice turns out to be a strategy towards fulfilling precisely sexual desires: "I surrounded her with gratitude and love that came out strongly as a sense of blessing, unsexual and generous. Those who have nothing are made wild with delight by very little." (p. 85) We have already seen that Mountjoy the child is generous. But it seems from this passage that Mountjoy the man is still generous. The following passage shows Mountjoy's psychological manoeuvring at work as well as the contradiction of his own claim about unsexual love:

But of course there were other occasions. I was not wise enough to know that a sexual sharing was no way of bringing us together. So instead of abandoning the game then and there\_\_and of course my own opinion of my masculinity was at stake\_\_I persevered. We began to accept that she should submit to caresses and as all old wives know these things come right in the end. I had my warm, inscrutable Beatrice, triumphed in a sort of sorrow and pity; and Beatrice cried and did not want to go away but, of course, she had to, that was the penalty of jumping the gun. She took her secret back to the training college and endured the faces that might guess, then came back, went to chapel, did

there whatever she did, came to what arrangement\_\_and went to bed with me again. I was full of love and gratitude and delight, but I never seemed to get near Beatrice, never shared anything with her. She remained the victim on the rack, even a rack of some enjoyment.  
(pp. 118-19)

This passage flaunts its own truths to the reader. Beatrice remains the victim. The situation could hardly be otherwise. What Mountjoy is after is not precisely the act of defloration, but rather the breaking of the unbreakable power. This could be seen almost as a rerun copy of the relationship between Pincher Martin and Mary Lovell. Martin asks himself the question: "By what chance ... was she set there in the road to power and success, unbreakable yet tormenting with the need to conquer and break?" (p. 149) Mountjoy also declares about Beatrice that: "I think she began to see herself as a centre of power." (p. 93) How could the writing subject declare that this character (Beatrice, the centre of power) jumps the gun? However, it is clear from the above passage that at this stage in the narrative, Mountjoy is not capable yet of breaking this power. But the final result is the complete destruction of Beatrice by consigning her to the loony bin: "Step by step we descended the path of sexual exploitation until the projected sharing had become an infliction." (p. 123) The journey from the unsexual, generous love to the sexual exploitation turns out to be very short. But it is also "useful" in one sense, that is, it helps to confirm the contradictory nature of this

writing subject, a subject that can only create by means of destruction:

There would come into my whole body a feeling of passionate certainty. Not that\_\_but this! Then I would stand the world of appearances on its head, would reach in and down, would destroy savagely and re-create\_\_not for painting or precisely for Art with a capital A, but for this very concrete creation itself.  
(p. 102)

No creation then. Rather, so such a bourgeois writing/creative subject might argue, that the different signifier should cease to exist than that I should hand over my hidden, metaphysical, precarious signified subjectivity. Real creativity for such a subject would only foresee the end of the phallic as well as the end of its power. And because Mountjoy is a bourgeois writer/artist, he has to face up to this loss at one point or another: "For she might come to care for me, I said, in my bourgeois pamphlet ..." (p. 90) Mountjoy can maintain his phallus (his power) as writing subject only by cramming into his discourse all the contradictions that he can find. But once these contradictions are "resolved", Mountjoy will evaporate from his own discourses. The Mountjoy before the act of defloration is not the same Mountjoy after it:

.... where in the long scale did Sammy come? For now there were rough ropes on my wrists and ankles and round my neck. They led through the streets, they lay at her feet and she could pick them up or not as she chose. It was torture to me as I rode away with the miles of rope trailing, that she did not choose.

(p. 88)

If this is the case, how could Beatrice jump the gun? Mountjoy's discourse is sustained only by the presence of contradictions. However, it is these same contradictions which shatter that very discourse. After riding away with the miles of rope trailing, Mountjoy comes back with a vengeance. For this bourgeois subject, the moment of defloration is certainly a contradictory moment of simultaneous presence and absence. It is a moment of possession and desertion at once. The expected revelation seems to be an illusion:

I loved her and was grateful. When you are young, you cannot believe that a human relationship is as pointless as it seems. You always think that tomorrow there will come the revelation. But in fact we had had our revelation of each other. There was nothing else to know. (p. 119)

But is a human relationship as pointless as it seems? And how can the last sentence in this passage square with an urgent question which comes only two pages later? Mountjoy implores Beatrice to tell him what she is:

"I am trying to find out about you. After all if we're going to spend our lives together\_\_where are you? What are you? What is it like to be you?" (p. 121)

These questions do not suggest that revelation has been had by Mountjoy. But Shakespeare who has delved into the psyche of the emergent (blossoming) bourgeois subject can surely throw some light on this problem:

... Enjoy'd no sooner but despised straight,  
 Past reason hunted, and no sooner had  
 Past reason hated as a swallowed bait,  
 On purpose laid to make the taker mad....

(sonnet 129)

Mountjoy has already admitted to Beatrice that: "I have gone mad." (p. 84) But if Shakespeare had delved into the psyche of the blossoming bourgeois subject, Golding certainly delves through the heart of the dying one. Mountjoy's contradictions cannot be sustained any longer without the twentieth-century reader finding out about them. Studies in a Dying Culture could have only been written (historical specificity) in the twentieth century and could have only been produced ("ideological" probability) by a communist. But if the text of Free Fall is to survive, then another ploy must be found. That Mountjoy expresses his desire that his book is preserved for posterity is abundantly clear even as early as the fourth page in his narrative: "Perhaps you found this book on a stall fifty years hence which is an-another (sic) now." (p. 8) Mountjoy's ploy is nothing less than a straightforward shameless confessional technique indicating that he might have harmed Beatrice. This ploy is only an attempt to regain the reader's confidence which has already been ruptured in a contradictory discourse. And once again Golding the "psychological" realist is at his best:

I must be careful. How much was conscious cruelty on my part? How much was her fault? She had never in her life made one movement towards me until I roared over her like a torrent. She was utterly passive in life. Then was that long history of my agony over her, my hell\_\_real as anything in life could be real\_\_was that self-created? Was it my doing? Did I put the remembered light in her face? Did I? (p. 122)

The writing subject knows that it must be careful. But Mountjoy's bluff can easily be detected. His cheap confession is negated by the condescending tone of his own discourse. By declaring that Beatrice was utterly passive, Mountjoy hopes to excuse his conduct. After all, he tries to put the remembered light in her face. It is precisely through such ploys that this character hopes to hang on to its already ideologically precarious position. Beatrice is inscribed in the text only to be uninscribed: "How did that good girl[, ] that uninscribed tablet receive these violations?" (p. 123) At this point (four pages later) Beatrice is replaced by Taffy: "But was I now to live the rest of my life with Beatrice, knowing all the time that I was in love with Taffy?" (p. 127) Mountjoy seems to be "anachronistically" an expert poststructuralist who is painfully aware of the endless play of signifiers. At the end of his discourse, Mountjoy comes back to enquire about the whereabouts of Beatrice.

In his search for an origin, then, the writer/artist creates something out of nothing. In other words, he creates a contradiction. The father's identity is never disclosed and there is a good reason to believe from the

first chapter that it will never be disclosed: "My father was not a man. He was a speck shaped like a tadpole invisible to the naked eye." (p. 14) But although the father shares the universality of the spermatozoon with all other fathers, Mountjoy still searches for a privileged position for his father (and by implication for himself): "The result was that my father was sometimes a soldier, he was a lovely man, an officer.... Later still, he was none other than the Prince of Wales." (p. 11) Knowing "instinctively" that these signifiers (soldier, lovely man, officer, Prince of Wales) may stand in for each other in discourse (all being men) and assume, therefore, the same privilege on this level, Mountjoy hastens to dig deep for a privilege that cannot be assumed by any signifier. The top of the scale of privileges is the Prince of Wales, and we notice that even here (on the surface and using similar letters) language inscribes within itself its own privileges by "capitalising" the letters "P" and "W". But we are told by the expert linguist Saussure that language: "is both a social product of the faculty of speech and a collection of necessary conventions that have been adopted by a social body to permit individuals to exercise that faculty."<sup>2</sup> It turns out then that this superficial, prejudiced privileging is a social production after all. Not only that, but Mountjoy's hankering for a hidden privilege, a privilege which shows its prejudice even on the level of

letters, creates still "deeper" contradictions. These contradictions accompany the writing bourgeois subject in its other discourses.

About the system adopted by the teacher of science, Nick Shales, Mountjoy writes:

My deductions from Nick's illogically adopted system were logical. There is no spirit, no absolute. Therefore right and wrong are a parliamentary decision like no betting slips or drinks after half-past ten. But why should Samuel Mountjoy, sitting by his well, go with a majority decision? Why should not Sammy's good be what Sammy decides? Nick had a saintly cobbler as his father and never knew that his moral life was conditioned by it. There are no morals that can be deduced from natural science, there are only immorals. The supply of nineteenth-century optimism and goodness had run out before it reached me. I transformed Nick's innocent, paper world. (p. 226)

Although we are in the presence of a bourgeois subject, the character of Samuel Mountjoy, revealing to us its "own" thoughts and deductions, it is still difficult to dissociate Golding's own deductions from those of his own bourgeois character. In "Belief and Creativity", Golding writes:

They dwarf the human beings, dwarf the buildings. Here comes plastic Marx, bearded and bellied with "workers of the world unite" across his vest. Darwin is inscribed with "natural selection". Freud stares with Jahvistic belligerence from behind his own enormous member.... They, inept, misleading, farcical, are what condition our communal awareness. It may seem to you that I am exempting myself from the ant-like creatures that watch or scurry in attendance on the three major figures. Believe me, I am not.... Let us agree I have been one: and yet at no time could I succeed in convincing myself.... I had assiduously read some of the writings of all three. It came to this at last, that I left the procession and went looking for my own belief.

Belief and creativity. Creativity and belief.<sup>39</sup>

Four pages later in the same article, Golding writes: "Of man and God. We have come to it, have we not? I believe in God; and you may think to yourselves\_\_\_here is a man who has left a procession and gone off by himself only to end with another gas-filled image he tows round with him at the end of a rope."<sup>4</sup> Golding is certainly not unaware of the contradiction his position involves. This contradiction is clearly "reflected" in Mounjoy's discourse. It is clear that Golding does not want to go with a majority decision. But if Golding is looking for his own belief, does he not think that Marx, Freud, and Darwin also looked for their own beliefs? It is this fact which made them the object of the popularization process which Golding mentions in the same article. It is clear that Golding is like these three figures by looking for his own belief. But what is not a point of similarity between these figures, however, is that among them Golding is the only one who believes in God. We all know from their statements, writings, attitudes and their careers that they were convinced atheists. Another dissimilarity which differentiates Golding from these figures is precisely the presence of contradictions in his works. It is surely paradoxical that that "enormous member" of Freud is precisely what overarches and dominates the character and thinking of Golding's bourgeois subject, a subject

that seems to share many opinions with its real creator. Golding closes the circle of similarities between himself and his character when he talks about the nineteenth-century optimism and how his character transforms Nick's innocent, paper world. We remember from the chapter on Lord of the Flies that Golding: "decided to take the literary convention of boys on an island, only make them real boys instead of paper cutouts with no life in them..."<sup>5</sup> (my emphasis)

It is precisely this "inversion" of a historically generated optimism (the nineteenth-century optimism of The Coral Island) into another historically engendered pessimism which involves Golding in philosophizing about history. And it is at this point that Golding's philosophy both reveals its contradictions and embodies itself in overdetermined contradictions in his fictions. It is almost impossible to dissociate Golding's philosophy from that which comes into his fiction. It is not fortuitous that Golding quotes his fictional bourgeois subject in order to substantiate his own "real" philosophical views about history. Neither is it fortuitous that when Golding tries to explain the concept of history, the concept of contradiction springs into his mind:

Tolstoy tried to explode the Great Man view of history. He substitutes for it a scheme of trends and movements. The wise man is not Napoleon who thinks he controls events, but Kutuzov, who knows he does not, but allows himself to be midwife to a natural process. Yet when Tolstoy comes to trends and movements, he falters, because he knows a movement is like the

canals on Mars\_\_\_an optical illusion which scatters into discrete particles, at a higher resolving (sic) power. That is why his immense Epilogue is self-contradictory. Any *scheme* of history is self-contradictory, because it is in some sense a metaphor. To quote a contemporary, "Life is like nothing, because it is everything."<sup>6</sup>

As we have seen earlier, this contemporary is Golding's writing subject in Free Fall, Samuel Mountjoy. To come back to Mountjoy's own discourse quoted above, we can see how he drags his contradictions, *non-sequiturs*, and "unnecessary questions" with him to battle against his own teacher of science. It is highly unlikely that a teacher of science would adopt his system illogically while his irrational pupil (the pupil who later believes that life is like nothing because it is everything) would logically call it into question. We can understand this passage and perhaps the whole text of Free Fall by deconstructing the sentence: "There is no spirit, no absolute". It is quite obvious that Mountjoy thinks of these two concepts as versions of each other. In other words, Mountjoy thinks that he can replace the word "spirit" with the word "absolute". It is clear that the concept of "spirit" is a nebulous one, whereas the concept of "absolute" is not as nebulous as the first one. To put it another way, Mountjoy "forces" the word "spirit" to stand in for the word "absolute". Mountjoy's emphasis, however, would seem to be on the word "absolute" since this would enable him to prove, if he proves first that there is no absolute, that

right and wrong are a parliamentary decision. This, in turn, would enable Mountjoy to follow his own right. It is clear that if there is no such thing as an absolute, then whatever Mountjoy decides to do might by chance or luck or even a parliamentary decision be right. We have already seen the torture inflicted on Beatrice. But if there are no absolutes to prove that Mountjoy has beyond doubt inflicted any harm on Beatrice, then it is easy to deny that he has inflicted any harm on her. What is done to Beatrice can always be described as a contingent, accidental mishap or misfortune which cannot be judged against any absolutes because there is no absolute. This is precisely why Mountjoy asks the question: "How much was conscious cruelty on my part?"

The writing subject is involved in nothing less than a wholesale operation to prove that it has done no wrong: "I cannot be blamed for the mechanical and helpless reaction of my nature." (p. 131) The bourgeois subject takes its time, listens to old wives' tales which reassure it that these things come right in the end, employs its own psychological manoeuvring in its own service, seduces the female, deflowers her, accuses her of jumping the gun after trailing with ropes on its neck for miles, gets bored with its deflowered female, replaces her with another, finishes its own discourse, and ultimately relaxes in the reassuring claim that there is no absolute.

But we have already established one absolute truth, that is, we have established beyond doubt that the writing subject in the text of Free Fall is involved in a self-contradictory pursuit. If we have already managed to find such an absolute, then certainly such an absolute is all one needs to enable them to speak coherently to one another. If what Mountjoy means by the concept "absolute" is one's ability to decide for example whether God exists or not, then certainly there is no absolute in that sense, although some Marxists including Marx himself were convinced atheists. Mountjoy can only be right if what is meant by absolutes is our ability to measure every human emotion with a ruler or to know precisely what is going on in the minds of other subjects. A philosophical argument is opened up in the following dialogue between Halde, the Doctor of Psychology, and Mountjoy:

Dr. Halde turned back to me.

"We know all about you."

I answered him instantly.

"That's a lie."

He laughed genuinely and ruefully.

"I see that our conversation will always jump from level to level. Of course we can't know all about you, can't know all about anybody. We can't know all about ourselves. Wasn't that what you meant?"

I said nothing.

"But then you see, Mr. Mountjoy, what I meant was something on a much lower level, a level at which certain powers are operative, at which certain deductions may be made. We know, for example, that you would find asceticism, particularly when it was forced on you, very difficult. I, on the other hand\_\_\_you see? And so on."

(p. 139)

It should be mentioned at this point that Golding is a novelist who almost always seems to be in control of his psychological scenes. What the writing subject is allowed to do here is to arrest or forestall the argument in its favour proleptically. Prolepsis seems to be one of the most effective devices in Golding's fictions (used again in The Spire between Jocelin and Roger). But after careful analysis of these proleptic arguments, the reader can expose them for what they really are, that is, specious arguments: "I said nothing." Mountjoy narrates this scene in which he injects his own philosophy (we already know that Halde is another figment of his imagination) so that the reader will be easily persuaded that Mountjoy knows what he is talking about. If the reader is likely to think that the teller of this tale, Mountjoy, is not being convincing in his own argument about absolutes, then Mountjoy can proleptically persuade the reader that he already knows about these possible objections, and yet he still thinks that there are no absolutes. The reader can confirm this narratological strategy by looking at the many times Mountjoy mentions that he feels guilty about torturing Beatrice and also the many other times in which he states that he should not be blamed. In other words, he already provides the reader with two possibilities. All that remains for readers of completely opposite views is to pick and choose their own interpretations of what they read. In this sense, this text is an interrogative text.

But to say that this seems to be the only interpretation of this particular scene is certainly to deny a deeper, more significant interpretation of it. Being a Doctor of Psychology, Halde knows exactly what he is talking about. What is dealt with in this dialogue is nothing less than the unconscious itself in the post-structuralist understanding of it. The unconscious is structured like a language. Not only is language composed of signifiers but it also works by metaphor and metonymy. And so it seems with the unconscious. If this is proven to be the case, that is, if the unconscious is really structured only like a language, then surely the unconscious will be "subjected" to the same operation of language. This is what Lacan calls the "sliding of the signified beneath the signifier." It is only in this way that Mountjoy can speak of a situation where no subject knows anything about any other subject. It is obvious then that Mountjoy has in mind the unconscious as the ground for meaning. By Jumping from level to level, Halde means exactly jumping from the ego, the conscious, to the unconscious. At the end of this chapter, we will see how this problem is tackled.

What is up for grabs in the discourse or the pamphlet of this bourgeois subject (and behind it the bourgeois ideology itself) is nothing less than the "fact" that "there are no morals that can be deduced from natural science." After all, the writing subject seems to be telling the reader, Marx only proved without doubt that

history is the record of the struggle between classes, the most recent between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. But perhaps it is the natural scientist himself, Darwin, who is the object of the discourse in the novel. In its search for an origin, the writing subject in Free Fall shows all the worrying signs in a nervous discourse that our ancestors might after all turn out to be those little apemen rather than those Princes of ancient Wales. In Free Fall, Marx and Darwin without doubt dominate the "latent" text: "Philip is a living example of natural selection," (p. 49) "workers of the world\_\_unite!" (p. 96) Even the Jahvistic belligerent Feud from behind his enormous member hovers over the text. It would probably have been impossible to shed light on Mountjoy's fear, "of course my own opinion of my masculinity was at stake", had it not been for the huge amount of scientific research done by Freud about the human psyche. Mountjoy himself is portrayed as the local psychologist.

Mountjoy's opinion of his masculinity does not match his opinion of Nick's universe. He tells the reader that: "Nick's stunted universe was irradiated by his love of people." (p. 226) It is hard, being armed with this knowledge about Nick's love of people which irradiates the universe, to judge Mountjoy's claim that "there is no spirit" and to see how Nick's universe is stunted. In other words, it is hard to understand what the writing subject means in its discourse by the word spirit. If love

is already there, how can there be no spirit? But Mountjoy leaves this contradiction only to compound another about the world of religion which is represented by Rowena Pringle. But we will see in a moment that Rowena Pringle is forgiven precisely because Mountjoy's "natural" inclination is towards religion rather than towards natural science. Mountjoy tells his reader that: "The beauty of Miss Pringle's cosmos was vitiated because she was a bitch." (p. 226) But if Miss Pringle is a bitch, what kind of beauty does her cosmos have? At this point it becomes clear that Mountjoy's discourse is marred by contradictions and by a philosophy which is only interested in a universe without people. In other words, the universe of Mountjoy's discourse is an uninhabitable one.

To have a clearer picture of what the writing subject is supposed to be like, I will quote its "intended" speech to Miss Pringle who tortures it excessively in its childhood:

To her my speech was to be simple.  
 "We were two of a kind, that is all. You were forced to torture me. You lost your freedom somewhere and after that you had to do to me what you did. You see? The consequence was perhaps Beatrice in the loony bin, our joint work, my work, the world's work. Do you not see how our imperfections force us to torture each other? Of course you do! The innocent and the wicked live in one world\_\_\_Philip Arnold is a minister of the crown and handles life as easy as breathing. But we are neither the innocent nor the wicked. We are the guilty. We fall down. We crawl on hands and knees. We weep and tear each other. Therefore I have come back\_\_since we are both adults and live in two worlds at once\_\_to offer forgiveness with both hands.

Somewhere the awful line of descent must be broken. You did that and I forgive it wholly, take the spears into me. As far as I can I will make your part in our story as if it had never been." (p. 251)

It is worth mentioning that Mountjoy's narrative ends only two pages later. I quote this extract at some length because I believe that it summarises the philosophy of the writing subject more than any other passage in the whole discourse. As for contradictions, it certainly shows a major contradiction with regard to the moral attitude of human subjects. It is necessarily a self-contradiction when Mountjoy talks about torture. In what sense would Miss Pringle's torture of Mountjoy as a child be justified? First of all, it would sound very cruel to justify the torture of a child under any circumstances and for whatever reasons. But let us look at the kind of justification Mountjoy offers: "You were forced to torture me. You lost your freedom somewhere and after that you had to do to me what you did." It is not only Mountjoy who loses his freedom, it is also Miss Pringle. And it is because she loses her freedom, she does to him what she has to do, namely, torture him. It is now clear why Mountjoy tortures Beatrice. Beatrice has to pay for Mountjoy's loss of freedom in the same way he has to pay for Miss Pringle's loss of freedom. And because this metonymic chain of signifiers is endless, it would seem that this circle of torturing each other is only natural in the same sense that the proliferation of linguistic

signifiers is natural. Mountjoy introduces the inevitable force of nature which makes Miss Pringle torture him. It is clear from Mountjoy's words that Miss Pringle does not intentionally torture him which, in turn, means that she cannot be held morally responsible. After all, she has to do that to him. But the contradiction lies in the fact that Mountjoy introduces this "inevitable" force of nature only to negate it in the next line when he does not justify his own torture of Beatrice. In other words, is his torture of Beatrice forced on him or does he intentionally torture her? In this contradiction, there is certainly a return from the "external" force which forces Miss Pringle to torture Mountjoy to the idealism of the absolute ego in the sense that Mountjoy feels guilty and blames himself for torturing Beatrice. Mountjoy contradicts himself by holding the subject responsible for its actions while at the same time exonerates Miss Pringle from the blame for torturing him. Mountjoy does feel guilty: "We are the guilty." However, the idealism of the absolute ego, the idea that man can act thoroughly over nature, is "established" in a "doubly" fallacious question: "Do you not see how our imperfections force us to torture each other?" First of all, the idealism of the absolute ego is attempted in the assumption that we can and should be perfect. It is only when we are perfect that we are likely to forget about torturing each other. Otherwise, it is precisely, so Mountjoy claims, because of

our imperfections that we torture each other. Secondly, it is not clear in this arguing in a circle whether we torture each other because we are imperfect, or we are imperfect because we torture each other. But it should be mentioned that behind this attempt to reach perfection, the writing subject unconsciously exposes a serious contradiction at the heart of bourgeois ideology. If the writing subject manages to prove in its discourse that perfection is almost an impossible aim, and prove that it easily will, then it is easy to see how Mountjoy is like any other subject, that is, a subject which is not immunised against making mistakes, and by implication is not immunized against torturing Beatrice. It is simply a "natural" force which drives people to torture each other. We have already seen how Mountjoy thinks that he cannot be blamed for the mechanical and helpless reaction of his nature. Miss Pringle tortures Mountjoy and he tortures Beatrice. Therefore, it is not unreasonable, according to Mountjoy, to suggest that every subject is likely to be driven by this natural force to torture other subjects

But having seen Mountjoy's simultaneous passion and despair about communication, and having already reached the end of the discourse, it is easy for the reader to pin down the problem. The whole problematic for Mountjoy, one which he does not understand fully, lies in this metonymic tendency of signifiers. It is no longer important who tortures whom because it seems that this is the ultimate

result, a ceaseless journey of torturing and tortured subjects. But it is only by a mysterious twist that the likes of Beatrice do not have any hope of chasing a male subject and seducing it and consigning it to a loony bin in the infinite chain. They are likely to be the tortured ones whereas the likes of Mountjoy can be both tortured by a Miss Pringle and torturers of a Beatrice Ifor.

I have mentioned earlier that the writing subject is looking for nothing less than the impossible gap between childhood and manhood. In other words, Mountjoy is looking for the moment of the loss of his freedom. I have also mentioned that the moment of the loss of innocence can only be the moment of experience. Mountjoy's insistence on finding the gap can only be seen as his insistence to generate a discourse. By the end of this discourse, Mountjoy makes it clear to the reader (since he is not addressing Miss Pringle) that: "But we are neither the innocent nor the wicked." At this point the reader is convinced that the aporetic discourse of this bourgeois subject revolves around an impossible gap. The writing subject feels at the end that it must arrest this dreadful metonymic chain of endless signifiers (tortures) even if it is by violence: "Somewhere the awful line of descent must be broken." It is up to the reader, of course, to sort this confusion out. But what the reader is sure about is that not only does Miss Pringle evaporate from the end of the speech but also that the writing subject wipes

feminism itself off its slate completely: "As far as I can I will make your part in our story as if it had never been."

Another important point in Mountjoy's intended speech to Miss Pringle is the introduction of the chaotic element achieved through the unexpected surprises which we learn about in the text. On page 53, we are told that: "Philip had no respect for authority, but caution rather." But in the above speech we are told that: "Philip Arnold is a minister of the crown and handles life as easy as breathing." Amid all this confusion, the writing subject finds that its best exit lies in what we can call maudlinism: "We weep and tear each other." What the reader ends up with is more confusion than he starts with at the beginning of the novel.

But to think that this discourse is only "fictional" and that it has nothing to do with "real" politics is certainly to misread the whole discourse. What is under attack is nothing less than the political concept of communism. The sixth chapter is perhaps the most "important" one in the whole novel. It is also one of the shortest chapters. It starts with: "Those were the great days of the Communist Party in England." (p. 125) But let us see how those memories gradually unfold in the discourse of the writing subject:

There was a meeting at the Town Hall in which a local councillor was going to give his reasons for joining the party.... "Why I am joining the Communist Party"

said the bills and hoardings, and the hall was crowded. He never got a chance to speak really; there were storms of cheering and counter-cheering, chairs overturned, local swirls in the thick blue cigarette smoke, cheers, shouts, boos. Someone went down at the back of the hall and there was a scuffle while paper arched up and glass smashed. I was looking at the councillor and his silent film mouthing so I saw when a bottle hit him over the right eye and he went down behind the green baize table. So I made to help him as someone turned out the lights and a police whistle blew. We huddled his limp body off the platform, through a side door and into his car, I and his daughter, while the police stood guard because after all he was a councillor. (p. 125)

The reader must bear in mind that this scene is only narrated two lines after that introductory sentence mentioned above. So this is what it is all about. These are the great days of the Communist Party. It was not the total political oppression of people all over the world which made the Communist Party a necessity in the first place. It is clear that a great day for Mountjoy is a day when there are shouts, boos, local swirls, chairs overturned, glass smashed and a scuffle while paper arched up. Apart from another scuffle which I will quote in a moment, this is the only memory of the great days of the Communist Party which the writing subject narrates. But as Mountjoy's discourse is itself full of forgiveness, so is the reader's response expected to be, that is, a response by a forgiving readerly subject. After all, we learn that Mountjoy is a communist. Not only does he help the injured councillor to his car but: "That very night she [the councillor's daughter, Taffy] came to my spartan room and

we made love, wildly and mutually. After all, we were communists and our private life was our own concern." (p. 126)

The other scuffle which Mountjoy narrates is the scene where one of the workers, Dai, rebels and gets disciplined:

Dai did what he was told for a time obediently and did not even guess what it was all about. Then he rebelled and got disciplined.... He got so much that he broke out into a tirade at a branch meeting. "You sit on your fat ass in your 'couse all the week, Comrade and I've to go out in the cold to sell the bloody *worker* every night, man!" (p. 96)

It is abundantly clear how this tendentious text undermines the concept of Communism. Subjects who join the party are obedient, not because they are born so (Original Sin does not work here) but because they are made so. These subjects do not even know what it is all about. It is "natural" then for them to rebel and get disciplined. This text which begins by Mountjoy's question: "Do I exasperate you by translating incoherence into incoherence?" (p. 8) is not incoherent after all. On the contrary, the text of Free Fall is absolutely ideologically "coherent" although there are a few slippages, fissures and self-mutilations which will ultimately yield to a stubborn materialist critique. One of these fissures is embodied in the character of Philip Arnold. Mountjoy admits that: "I thought he had become my henchman but really he was my Machiavelli." (p. 49) Philip

subjects Mountjoy to a quasi-interrogative session at the end of which he asks:

"Know Diogenes?"

"Never heard of 'im."

"Went round with a lamp. Wanted to find an honest man."

"You being bloody rude? I'm honest. So's comrades. Bloody blackshirts." (p. 99)

Mountjoy's honesty is tested two chapters later: "But as for Taffy and me, we made ourselves a place between four walls and we faded out of the party as the bombs began to fall and the time of my soldiering drew nearer." (p. 130) With this withering, the political, ideological argument about the Communist Party in the text is closed. But what is not closed is the search for an origin. It is this search which brings Mountjoy back to the moments of childhood to make sense of his loss of freedom. And it is these moments in the narrative which bring the reader back to Mountjoy's two towers, Ma and Evie.

The "apocalyptic grandeur" which Ma shows in her confrontation with Mrs. Donovan, the scene where "Minnie pissed on the floor", and the childish audacity with which Sammy pisses and spits on the high altar of the church, all these are remembrances which "reconstitute" Sammy's physical, real world. He readily agrees that: "the scene is worth reconstructing." (p. 19) However, what seems to be at stake here is not the importance of this or the other scene, but the hidden centre behind them, the

"originary" motivation for the play of these scenes in such a manner as to show us the unquenchable desire to catch the heart of the truth. Whatever the truth might be, it still eludes the character-narrator. Moreover, what makes things worse for the narrator is language itself, the only means available to "reconstruct" his world. Here we come to the vicious circle through which the narrator narrates hopelessly without ever finding the centre: "Our loneliness is the loneliness not of the cell or the castaway; it is the loneliness of that dark thing that sees as at the atom furnace by reflection." (p. 8) It is obvious that the dark thing suggests the unconscious and that the reflection suggests the endless metonymic chain of signifiers which constitutes for Sammy that unconscious. And because the unconscious is so vast an area, the only possibility of achieving a compromise is by selecting from that unconscious, if one can, the most important, salient points: "The mind cannot hold more than so much; but understanding requires a sweep that takes in the whole of remembered time and then can pause. Perhaps if I write my story as it appears to me, I shall be able to go back and select." (p. 7) But again the reader must remember that it is only a question of "perhaps", and that there is always the possibility of "perhaps not". How could the writing subject decide, for example, on the significance of that which is selected and written and the non-significance of that which is "repressed" by virtue of

the process of writing itself if it feels already that what is repressed is usually more "important" than what is declared? Here lies the problem for the character-narrator where all the different manifestations of the physical world do not "really" count. What really counts for Mountjoy is the pure consciousness itself that he exists. This consciousness is the only thing he can be sure about. He even expresses this "fact" hurriedly and as elliptically as possible: "I exist." (p. 9) Thus what is confirmed is precisely that Cartesian subject which thinks therefore it is. I say "hurriedly" and "elliptically" simply because the subject is ensnared in the trap of "relativism" and "non-absolutism", two concepts which seem to engulf its own identity. Mountjoy is afraid of being mistaken even about the physicalism of his own existence. Consequently, he shows an indifferent attitude to physical facts altogether:

Out of our common indifference to mere physical fact, came answers that varied as [Ma's] current daydream varied.... Only the coldest attitude to the truth would have condemned them as lies, though once or twice, Ma's rudimentary moral sense made her disclaim them almost immediately. (p. 11, emphasis is mine)

The dissatisfaction, however, with this mere physicalism of existence and the desire to figure out a fixed, stable spiritual or intellectual identity doubly unfixes the narrator simply because he realizes that within language it is "impossible" to pin down a

definition of intellectual identity. Hence the continual pursuit of many different intellectual systems or, to put it metaphorically, "hats" which will never suit the wearer:

Then why do I write this down? Is it a pattern I am looking for? That Marxist hat in the middle of the row, did I ever think it would last me a lifetime? What is wrong with the Christian biretta that I hardly wore at all? Nick's rationalist hat kept the rain out, seemed impregnable plate-armour, dull and decent....

(p. 6)

But Mountjoy mentions something about Ma that could be taken as a sufficient signal for coherent communication: "Ma's rudimentary moral sense." However, the dissatisfaction with the mere physical fact makes Sammy, Ma and the little Evie venture into dreamlands or regions of fantastication where there is no room for the "truth" but a fertile land of lies. But Sammy articulates the type of fantasies he has: "I was not quite the fantasist that Evie was; my stories were excess of life, not compensation." (p. 49) The question as to why these characters would prefer a dreamland as a "constituted" world may throw light on the oppressions of "reality" as a physical fact. Although communication is a self-cancelling activity in the sense that it is simultaneously our passion and despair, the desire to communicate still haunts the narrator, and the row of "hats" is evidence of two contradictory things. Sammy is looking for a stable identity while there is enough evidence in the narrative

to prove that the whole enterprise of discovery, as seen by the narrator, indicates a rejection of a "stable" identity.

If we manage to find the keystone which "invisibly" gives sustenance to the narrative, we may be able to conjure into being, by that same gesture, the tyrannical, mysterious desire on the part of the narrator to understand the significance of "being" and to shed light on the circularity of the narrative around itself: "Is this the point I am looking for? No. Not here." (p. 52) There is every reason to believe from the discourse that the subject is trying to "re"unite with the mother's body. Seeing that there is no father [Law] to divide the child from the mother's body, it becomes easy to understand Mountjoy's desire to remain "bonded" to that body, the symbol of security: "Beyond her there is nothing, nothing. She is the warm darkness between me and the cold light. She is the end of the tunnel, she." (p. 15) But having entered into the symbolic realm of language by necessity, the child is severed from the mother without having to negotiate, as it were, the painful passage through the Oedipus complex. Thus the child does not enter that realm through the "usual" rites of initiation into the social network. The subject still has its desire to reunite with the mother's body in search for a lost pleasure: "I seem to remember searching for that corner of her apron and the pleasure of finding it again." (p. 16) But having been

necessarily severed from the mother's body by language itself (in the absence of the father), the subject turns its revenge on language itself, and by extension, on society. Mountjoy himself becomes the father who then tries contradictorily to remove his own self from the mother's body in order to be accepted "normally" in the wider social network. In other words, Mountjoy is his own father, or more metaphorically, the Phallus itself. Mountjoy becomes his own scourge.

Mountjoy's desire to see the whole world destroyed is stated very clearly:

I welcomed the destruction that war entails, the deaths and terror. Let the world fall. There was anarchy in the mind where I lived and anarchy in the world at large, two states so similar that the one might have produced the other. (pp. 131-32)

It is in this way that Mountjoy's destructive creativity is created. Mountjoy as we have seen is both a writer and an artist. But he never finds the lost phallus (the father) which can represent both anguish and relief; anguish for severing the child from the mother and relief for introducing it to the "normal" wider social network. Mountjoy insists on his heterosexuality: "I have never felt more severely heterosexual." (p. 110) And the only thing this deprived subject is certain of is sex:

A young man certain of nothing but salt sex; certain that if there was a positive value in living it was this undeniable pleasure. Be frightened of the pleasure, condemn it, exalt it\_\_but no one could deny that the pleasure was there. As for Art\_\_did they not

say\_\_and youth with the resources of all human knowledge at its disposal lacks nothing but time to know everything\_\_did they not say in the thick and unread textbooks that the root of art was sex?

(p. 108)

There is certainly a revolutionary insight in the sentence "youth with the resources of all human knowledge at its disposal lacks nothing but time to know everything." But if we throw a "retrospective" glance at Mountjoy's discourse, we will know exactly why this subject comes to be a destructive creator. Mountjoy's notion of sex and pleasure is similar to the one he thinks his mother "had":

Her casual intercourse must have been to her what his works are to a real artist\_\_themselves and nothing more. They were meetings in back streets or fields, on boxes, or gateposts and buttresses. They were like most human sex in history, a natural thing without benefit of psychology, romance or religion. (p. 15)

But Mountjoy's attempt to find his origin (father, identity, Law, the Phallus) does not succeed. And thus the pre-post-structuralist (the novel was published in 1959) metaphorically and metonymically replaces his pencil with his penis and his penis with his pencil within an endless chain of poststructuralist signifiers: "When the drawing was finished I made love to her again. Or rather, I repeated what my pencil had done, finished what my pencil had begun. The lovemaking accepted that she was unable to take part. The lovemaking was becoming an exploitation." (p. 120) Thus it is creation on the drawing board followed

by destruction in the drawing room or maybe vice versa:  
"For maybe was sign of all our times. We were certain of  
nothing. I should have said "Maybe" not Beatrice." (p.  
108) But it is only three lines later that this bourgeois  
subject which asserts that it is certain of nothing  
asserts that a young man is certain of nothing but salt  
sex. The contradictions we have seen in this discourse are  
created because of a bias which cannot be eradicated  
without at once shattering the whole discourse. Mountjoy  
asks a question about Miss Pringle, the teacher of  
religion who teaches him about Moses and the burning bush:

But how could she crucify a small boy, tell him that  
he sat out away from the others because he was not fit  
to be with them and then tell the story of that other  
crucifixion with every evidence in her voice of sorrow  
for human cruelty and wickedness? (p. 210)

But having arrested the flow of signifiers by violence  
to begin its discourse, the writing subject can only  
finish it by confirming that: "The burning bush resisted  
and I understood instantly how we lived a contradiction."  
(pp. 216-17)

## NOTES

1. William Golding, The Hot Gates (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 115.
2. Ferdinand de Saussure, Course in General Linguistics, trans. Wade Baskin (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1966), p. 9.
3. William Golding, A Moving Target (1982; rpt. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 188.
4. Ibid., p. 192.
5. Golding, The Hot Gates, p. 88.
6. Ibid., p. 123.
7. Quoted by Terry Eagleton, Literary Theory: An Introduction (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), p. 168.

## Chapter Five

### The Spire: The Despairing Aspirant

"All social life is essentially *practical*. All mysteries which lead theory to mysticism find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice."<sup>1</sup> (Karl Marx)

"... we place no trust in altruistic feeling, we who lay bare the aggressivity that underlies the activity of the philanthropist, the idealist, the pedagogue, and even the reformer."<sup>2</sup> (Jacques Lacan)

In the previous chapter, we have seen how Samuel Mountjoy lives a contradiction embedded in the world of religion. Rowena Pringle, the teacher of religion, is described as bitchy while her universe is described as beautiful. However, the protagonist of The Spire (1964) is himself the Dean of the cathedral. In this chapter, I will be analysing Jocelin's behaviour in terms of self-contradiction. If the contradictions we have seen in Free Fall sink somewhere below the narrative, those in The Spire float, as it were, on the surface. It is in relation to Marx's above remark that I will be dealing with Jocelin's contradictions. I will show how these contradictions are strikingly "crystallised" between his pronouncements and actions. In doing so, I will be able to pinpoint some contradictions between mysticism as religious obfuscation and Jocelin's practical behaviour which represents the human rather than superhuman needs of

an ordinary human subject. I use the word "crystallised" instead of "represented" since it is rather difficult as Terry Eagleton convincingly argues to "represent a contradiction."<sup>3</sup> I will also attempt to show that these contradictions are ideologically "reflective" of social contradictions in the period when the transition from feudalism into capitalism was taking place historically. However, some of these contradictions, as we shall see in a moment, are compounded in The Spire partly because of Golding's own handling of the character. But an important theme will emerge from the character of Dean Jocelin, namely, the concept of "self" stretched to its limit.

Perhaps this concept is too nebulous to be explained within the bounds of one chapter, but I will restrict my treatment of it to the character of the protagonist in its attempt to carry on the realization of its vision in a "practical" construction of a spire while the actual "productive" forces show their disfavour of this task. Consequently, we have the "intellectual", visionary side with its passivity in terms of action, and the opposite active side which is obliged to shoulder the responsibility of actually building Jocelin's spire. Although Jocelin's vision is finally confirmed by the final construction of the spire, Jocelin himself is plunged into doubts about that same vision. This places the protagonist at the heart of contradiction. The moment of the completion of the spire is the same moment of

Jocelin's death. In other words, we have to distinguish between the vision and the visionary (Yeats's question: "How can we know the dancer from the dance?" presents itself to our minds almost forcefully). The visionary's vision itself constitutes two contradictory moments of death and resurrection. I will analyse this contradiction by taking the first chapter as a suitable point of departure.

The opening paragraph in the novel "establishes" Dean Jocelin as a favourable, optimistic character. But in order to understand the "dialectical" relationship between Jocelin and the other characters, we should try to understand the character of the protagonist as correctly as possible. This task will permit the reader to concentrate on the paradoxes and contradictions which crop up in the description of Dean Jocelin. We shall also be able to notice the gradual transition from a cheerful character into a "miserable" one. In this sense, The Spire is a "peripeteian" novel. In the opening paragraph, Jocelin is "caught" (by the reader) laughing and with a chin up:

He was laughing, chin up, and shaking his head. God the Father was exploding in his face with a glory of sunlight through painted glass, a glory that moved with his movements to consume and exalt Abraham and Isaac and then God again. (p. 7)

There are two features to be pointed out here: optimism and love. In the argumentative dialogue between Lord Dean

and Lord Chancellor over the technical issue of building the spire, the former replies optimistically: "The foundations. I know. But God will provide." (p. 8) But the leitmotif of love in the novel is a better yardstick against which the "genuine" feelings of the protagonist should be measured and tested. Indeed, the first chapter abounds in phrases where the word "joy" stands out and where the reader begins to wonder whether it is seriously meant or whether it is a conscious parody of the protagonist's behaviour:

"eyes half closed; joy" (p. 7), "shot an arrow of love after him" (p. 8), "loving him" (p. 8), "loving her" (p. 11), "he whispered with joy too deep for the open air" (p. 12), "loving them in his joy" (p. 13), "Jocelin remembered his joy" (p. 14), "smiling, with joy like wings" (p. 21), "since joy was its own prayer" (p. 21), "joy fell on the words like sunlight" (p. 21), "joy, fire, joy" (p. 22), "the joy and comfort and peace of the angel" (p. 23), "in the joy of the angel, still smiling, loving him" (p. 23), "laughing aloud in joy and love" (p. 26)

All this joy mixed with love stands in complete contrast to what the reader experiences in the behaviour of the protagonist towards the other characters. From the encounter between Dean Jocelin and one of the important characters in the novel, Pangall, a different image begins to emerge. We know from the dialogue between the two that Jocelin is not the forgiving or merciful type of character and that he is not as patient as a Dean is expected to be. We can detect from Father Anselm's retort the hint that Jocelin's behaviour is inexcusable:

"When you consider, my Lord Dean, to what a degree we must accept a disruption of our normal life, a song\_\_forgive me\_\_however worldly, seems an offence venial enough.... And\_\_forgive me again\_\_but since these men, these strange creatures from every end of the world, seem willing to resort to violence at the slightest provocation, it might be wiser to let them sing."

(p. 32)

We can detect a bit of arrogance in Jocelin's attitude towards others which tends to blacken the image of his character in the eyes of the reader. This is best shown in the dialogic part of the novel:

"Reverend Father."

"Not now, Pangall."

"Please!"

"Jocelin shook his head, and made to pass round; but the man held out a roughened hand as if he would dare to lay it on the dean's cassock...."

(p. 14)

There is already a hint in this dialogue that the distance between Jocelin and Pangall should not be narrowed and that each should know where the other stands. The intention that "as if he would dare to lay it on the dean's cassock" shows us the respectability or perhaps the fear of the ecclesiastical robe and its wearer. But in this argument we begin to see the effects of language and we realize intuitively who the winner and the loser within that language will be. For the words "Reverend Father" Pangall receives the "arrogant", stubborn answer "Not now, Pangall." But immediately after, we can see Jocelin softening towards the more effective word "please" and his answer this time takes the form of a simple shake of the

head. It is very important to realize that for the word "please" no rude answers can possibly be expected, otherwise the communication system which is unconsciously built on certain rules of behaviour will collapse. If we look further into the matter, we notice that even when the word "please" does not have the desired effect, the resort to "violence" might be the only choice: "as if he would dare". We have just heard Father Anselm ascertain that the strange creatures from every end of the world seem "willing to resort to violence at the slightest provocation", that is, when their privacies are encroached upon. We will notice that Jocelin's position, even when he is a dean, is debilitated largely within language itself, the reason being of course the important fact that amid this rising "capitalistic" society which depends largely on material evidence and experiment, Jocelin's reasoning depends on faith rather than evidence. By being the language of direct perception, through the sense of sight mostly, the language of material evidence helps to undermine the language of faith and metaphysicality. In The Spire, we will see how the church is shown to undergo a gradual recession against the vast advance of experimentation. The rest of the dialogue between Jocelin and Pangall shows the seriousness or rather the urgency with which Pangall is trying to explain the matter:

... There was dust on his angry face. His voice was hoarse, with dust and anger.

"The day before yesterday they killed a man."

"I know. Listen, my son\_\_"

...

"One day, they will kill me."

...

"They shan't kill you. No one shall kill you."

...

"Reverend Father, why did you do it?"

...

"You know as well as I do, my son. So that this House will be more glorious than before."

Pangall showed his teeth.

"By breaking the place down?"

"Now stop, before you say too much." (pp. 14-15)

(emphasis is mine)

As we shall see later, Pangall turns out to be right in his prediction. We can see from this kind of catechism where both characters stand. Although Pangall is not depicted as a "traditionalist", he still shows some signs of interest in what is already there for his benefit. Jocelin, on the other hand, goes certainly for the new by "dismissing" the past in an attempt to glorify both the present and the future. However, it is important to stress exactly for whose future and for whose benefit Jocelin is trying to demolish the old place. We have already heard Jocelin emphasise that it is: "My place, my house, my people." (p. 8) So, the power and the glory are rather "feudalistic" in their character and intention. Further investigation into the language of this dialogue will prove the "innocent" desire on the reader's part to side with Pangall in rejection of Jocelin's seemingly rude and unco-operative attitude. Faced with the "fact" of a murder, Jocelin has nothing to offer when he stammers out such a pacifying answer: "I know. Listen, my son\_\_". Faced

with the ultimate eradication of a human subject in the manner of murder, faith and regret do not seem to be enough to ward off the offence. We are reminded here of what Shakespeare says to the fair friend:

Nor can thy shame give physic to my grief,  
 Though thou repent, yet I have still the loss,  
 Th' offender's sorrow lends but weak relief  
 To him that bears the strong offence's cross.

(sonnet 34)

We can see that Jocelin's power or influence is undermined by Pangall's unruly attack and so he commands him to stop. The "misunderstandings" which occur in the dialogue between Jocelin and Pangall reveal the difference in the ideological orientation between both characters:

"My great-great-grandfather helped to build it. In the hot weather he would roam through the roof over the vault up there, as I do. Why?"

"Softly, Pangall, softly!"

"Why? Why?"

"Tell me then."

The last sentence "tell me then" does not apparently contribute to the cogency of the argument. Jocelin's position of strength is already compromised. Subdued by the torrent of "why's" and unable to give an informed answer, Jocelin simply resorts to a pathetic demand: "Tell me then." The whole dialogue proceeds unconvincingly from the dust on the angry face, the killing of a man, and the hoarse voice, through the "softly, Pangall, softly", to the stultifying "jocular" retort from Jocelin:

"I must speak with you\_\_\_"

"And what d'you suppose you're doing now?" (p. 16)

If such a dialogic situation could be described as "realistic" (and obviously it could well be), such realism would generate a feeling of embarrassment on the reader's part who expects from the outset a different outcome. There is certainly no hint of joy or love in Jocelin's retort to Pangall. However, the end of this dialogue is an indication of the way in which a loser in an argument would escape. By using stultifying remarks like the one uttered by Jocelin in such a serious dialogic situation, language takes revenge on itself, as it were, while the speaking subject can easily slip away intact as Jocelin does until it "exhausts" the possibilities of linguistic evasiveness. There is a disparity within this dialogue between two languages (ideologies): the first represents a site of struggle intimated in the angry face and rhythms and the repetition of angry "why's" while the second site is that of "jocular" stultification. The transition from one into the other is not fortuitous but rather forced into being through the poverty of both languages. Pangall's is the language of evidence and material facts paradoxically undermined by the lack of authority, while Jocelin's pacifying language is the language of persuasion invested with power and paradoxically vitiated by its dependence on faith. But when we study the character of Jocelin carefully, we meet with a sense of confusion: "I

didn't know I could still be as happy! So he stood on the planks in the wind and let the happiness calm all the confusions in his head." (p. 106) Jocelin's confusions have a lot to do with his obsession with Goody Pangall:

Then she was gone, gasping and sobbing, and slipping past him, to race down the dark ambulatory, so that her heavy cloak flapped in the air, and beneath her skirt he glimpsed her ankles and feet. He put his hands on either side of his head and spoke angrily out of the depths of his confusion and incomprehension. "What's all this?" (p. 100)

Another important issue beside Jocelin's confusions is his authority. The protagonist certainly does not show the absolutism of his power. The reason behind that lies perhaps in the fact that he needs Pangall and the other characters in his mission to build the spire, and perhaps that is why his power is tinged paradoxically with obsequiousness. It is precisely at this point that the contradictions begin to emerge and we begin to see different aspects of Jocelin's character in a new light. Dean Jocelin turns out to be an ordinary character. One of the twentieth-century thinkers to pinpoint this kind of contradiction particularly in relation to priests is Antonio Gramsci. In his discussion of "The Southern Question" in Italy, Gramsci states that:

In the North the separation of the Church from the State and the expropriation of ecclesiastical property has been more thoroughgoing than in the South, where the parishes and convents have preserved or reconstituted a good deal of both fixed and moveable property. In the South the priest appears to the peasant: (1) as a bailiff with whom the peasant comes

into conflict over the question of rents; (2) as a usurer who demands the highest rates of interest, and plays up religious obligations to secure the payment of rent or interest; (3) as a man who is subject to common passions (women and money) and so spiritually inspires no confidence in either his discretion or impartiality. Confession, therefore, has little significance, and the southern peasant, though often superstitious in a pagan sense, is not priest-ridden. This whole set-up explains why in the South the Popular Party ... has comparatively little influence, and possesses no apparatus of institutions and mass organizations. The attitude of the peasant towards the clergy is summed up in the popular saying: "The priest is a priest at the altar; elsewhere he is a man like any other."<sup>4</sup>

There is a great similarity between this popular saying and Marx's remark in relation to the practicality of social life. I must mention at this point that Golding himself seems to be unclear about the character of Dean Jocelin. We will see later that Golding's intention behind the book does not come through. Perhaps the reason has to do with the two concepts of mystery and imagination. Golding repeatedly emphasises the concepts of mystery and imagination. But it is clear that the one might not always serve the purposes of the other. In other words, one can be imaginative without necessarily being mystificatory. In his book The Critical Twilight, John Fekete writes: "[T]he imagination could be a unifying principle of the production and reproduction of the totality of life."<sup>5</sup> It is true that Jocelin's vision tries to encompass the totality of life, but there is a lot of mystification in The Spire. It is almost inevitable that most critics of this book should mention something about the contradictory

behaviour of the protagonist. Mark Kinkead-Weekes and Ian Gregor sum up the matter of contradictions in one sentence: "The spire is built in heavy stone, in faith, in sin; all three things are true, and contradictory."<sup>6</sup> In his book A View from the Spire, Don Crompton writes: "Faced with such a welter of contradictory implications and indications, one would expect the resolution to be uneasily poised on a fine balance of uncertainty, and, for much of the final section of the book, so it is."<sup>7</sup>

It is clear from Golding's emphasis on the glories of God and man that he prefers Jocelin's vision to the workers' slavish adherence to measurements and material evidence. But it is obvious that the spire cannot stand by the power of faith alone. It has to have real, material foundations capable of supporting it. There is no need to state the ridiculously obvious fact that whatever amount of prayers there are for the spire to stand, it will not stand without real, material foundations. Golding writes The Spire with Salisbury Cathedral in mind. As Laurence Lerner argues:

... the cathedral of the novel is identical with Salisbury. Salisbury Cathedral too stands on a marshy meadow with virtually no foundations, but it has lasted, spire and all (and its spire too was added later), because under the marsh is one of the finest weight-bearing geological formations in the world. The medieval architects did not know that, of course: for them, it must have seemed a miracle. And so Jocelin is able to turn Roger's argument back on him: Shown the inadequacy of the foundations, he takes that as reason for faith... When building is concerned, Roger is the man of reason, who understands what he is saying; and he is shown wrong. Jocelin, in his ignorance succeeds:

for all his corrupt motives, for all his defeat as a human being, he built the spire, his vision was vindicated, and faith triumphed over reason. #

After all the hints and indications in the first two chapters concerning the fact that the foundations will not bear the weight of the spire, Jocelin still insists, depending on his own faith and vision, that the spire should be built. If the material evidence which the master builder brings up is not enough to convince Jocelin, one wonders why the latter's insistence should not be considered foolish.

But the whole project of building the spire can be seen as a struggle for power. As much as we would reasonably think that what Jocelin is doing is ultimately foolish, we find ourselves confronted with the "foxy" side of his character. He seems to be capable of raising highly intelligent, proleptic arguments with the master builder, and he does not seem to be the Fool the other characters and the reader tend to think he is:

"Didn't you dig the pit for me, too, Roger? A pit to catch a dean?"

But Roger Mason was not smiling. He was looking across under heavy eyebrows like a bull.

"What d'you mean?"

"Let the dean see how impossible the spire is. There's no work this summer at Winchester or Chichester, Lacock, Christchurch, no abbeys to build, no nunneries or priories; and the new king isn't a castle builder. But here, you thought, we can tide the summer over, show dean Jocelin what a fool he is. That way, you can keep the army together until something turns up, because without the army you're nothing." (p. 39)

This is one of the most effective passages in the novel in many respects. Jocelin's reasoning at once swings the scale of sympathy towards him and alienates the reader from him. By charting Mason's intentions in this way, Jocelin exposes the hypocrisy of the "adverse" party and shows that he is not that foolish after all. On the other hand, the reader is alienated from Jocelin because his love is falsified by his keen knowledge. Jocelin is shown as a scheming character because he tends to exploit the workers knowing already their helpless situation and their lack of choice. Therefore, his reasoning in this passage cuts both ways by exposing his own hypocrisy as well as that of the adverse party. But since the reader's concentration is mainly on Jocelin's character, the latter's reasoning works as a repelling force for the reader who is "unfixed" by the text and left prey to the whimsicalities of the narrative. It is clear at this stage that Jocelin's love and joy have disappeared from the text.

Almost the whole narrative is compounded of evidence on the part of the workers and a "divine" negation of that material evidence on the part of the protagonist. However, this aspect of Jocelin's character is not intended to arouse the reader's doubts about the "genuineness" of his attempt to build the spire. The building of the spire is seriously meant to represent Jocelin's folly. But we will be able to have a fuller understanding of Jocelin's

contradictory behaviour if we analyse some of Golding's own beliefs about saints and their extrasensory powers of perception. Golding seems to have a "peculiar" understanding of saints:

For below what we are told is the purer vision, perception, of the saint there lies that curious region of the occult, of psychokinesis, extrasensory perception, second-sight; a region endlessly debated, fruitlessly investigated, and coming down at the end it seems, to a matter of individual opinion. Below that area again are there not in us all, hints and not flashes but sometimes sparks of the inexplicable, fleeting suggestions that of all things the human mind, its whole volume of mentation still remains the mystery of mysteries?"

(emphases are mine)

Equipped with the power of the occult and extrasensory perception, Jocelin the saint will clearly be able to intuit Roger's intentions. We learn from the text that Jocelin thinks of himself as a saint:

"Say what you like; he's proud."

"And ignorant."

"Do you know what? He thinks he is a saint! A man like that!"

But when the two deacons saw the dean looming over them, they fell to their knees. He looked down, loving them in his joy. (p. 13)

But it would seem mysterious indeed to see the saintly Jocelin act indifferently towards the deaths which take place during the building of the spire. What is still more mysterious is the fact that there is so much sexual incantation and rage in Jocelin's thoughts as we shall see later. A question which presents itself quickly to our

minds is: why isn't Jocelin with all his intuition capable of discovering that these two deacons are talking about him? As we can see from Jocelin's behaviour, the two deacons are right in their judgement of his character. But at the same time, the narrator within the scope of more than 50 pages ascertains that Jocelin can truthfully shoot the other characters with love and joy whenever the occasion for that arises. Where, then, does the "misunderstanding" come from? In their search for a method to enable them to understand the real life-process of men, Marx and Engels believed that:

In direct contrast to German philosophy which descends from heaven to earth, here it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. That is to say, not of setting out from what men say, imagine, conceive, nor from men as narrated, thought of, imagined, conceived, in order to arrive at men in the flesh; but of setting out from real, active men, and on the basis of their real life-process demonstrating the development of the ideological reflexes and echoes of this life-process.<sup>10</sup> (emphases are mine)

This passage comes significantly from Marx and Engels's On Literature and Art. With this materialist philosophy, it can be revealed that the one Jocelin we have in The Spire is actually two Jocelins, the saintly, narrated Jocelin and the real, active one. The first actually thinks, perceives, imagines, loves and visualizes like a saint while the second acts indifferently towards Pangall, the Sacrist, the women including his aunt, and destroys Roger Mason's life exactly as a man in the flesh would do.

The reader is disarmed in the face of these contradictions where the only thought remaining is that Golding's novels are difficult to understand.''

But the contradiction between Jocelin's devotion to God, "Thou dost glorify the lives of Thy chosen ones" (p. 22), and his earthliness is not one which is intentionally engendered for a certain purpose, but rather a "genuine" contradiction. Golding explores this contradiction but he does not seem to be able to reveal its *raison d'être*. This is so for two reasons. First, perhaps it would have been impossible for Golding to have written The Spire if he had thoroughly understood the contradictory behaviour of his character. I am referring here to the im/possibility of writing the text of The Spire in the first place with the full knowledge of the reasons behind the contradiction. The second reason concerns Golding's understanding of human nature. Golding does not seem to believe that a materialist philosophy can explain the historical process. In his essay "Utopias and Antiutopias", he declares that: "Indeed, during the last hundred years the utopian has had hanging over him always the brooding question from Marx, "how are you to bring it about?" That Marx found the wrong answer does not lessen the importance of the question."<sup>12</sup> This clearly biased judgement apparently caused much damage to the formal construction of his narrative if not to the content. Statements like "Jocelin sighed, and answered him, tired,

irritable, and strangely sapped of joy" (p. 46, my emphasis) would not explain away the contradictions which characterize at least the first half of The Spire. What is displayed here is a genuine disbelief that Jocelin can really be sapped of joy. Golding is genuinely confused by his own character. He apparently assumes that a saintly character like Jocelin cannot possibly be sapped of joy. But Jocelin's maliciousness is clearly shown in his confrontation with other characters: "I must be careful not to anger him, he thought. As long as he does what I want, let him say what he likes." (p. 38, my emphasis) Does not this roguish intention prove Jocelin to be an egocentric character with no self-respect? Jocelin's malice is also shown towards Father Anselm: "Let him sulk; if he wants to." (p. 45) At the same time, we hear Jocelin, unconvincingly, of course, "admit" that: "Father Anselm. Friendship is a precious thing." (p. 48) This confession will certainly be seen in a different light the moment it is juxtaposed with "as long as he does what I want". The protagonist does prove to be a fiendish wayward character.

But Golding's claim that Marx found the wrong answer cannot be true. It is highly unlikely that Marx specified what experiences people should live in their lives. In other words, it is highly unlikely that Marx mused about the content of any future utopia. Discussing the issue of the political necessities of lifting repression, the

Marxist critic Terry Eagleton writes: "A radical politics can prescribe what must be done for this to occur; but it cannot prescribe the content of what will then be lived, for the content, as Marx says, goes beyond the phrase. All radical politics are thus in a profound sense formalistic."<sup>13</sup> And if Golding mentions the importance of the question, he does not seem to think of any alternative to the one provided by Marx. It is clear from The Spire that Jocelin exhibits the practical, social aspect rather than the saintly part of his character. As Dean of the cathedral, Jocelin is involved in nothing less than the unconscious attempt to preserve the structure of dominators and dominated intact. But at the end of the novel, he is stripped of his powers.

I would like at this point to venture a brief interpolation at the end of which I will return to this concept of power. I will address myself to an objection that might be raised about the artistic creation of Golding the author and its appropriateness to the real intentions of Golding the individual. This is, of course, a matter whose sensitivity creates a considerable misunderstanding for some readers. The reader must realize that there is bound to be some kind of difference or distance, although it is not always the case, between the opinions the author as individual holds and what the author as writer of fiction allows or is obliged to allow to go into the making of his own fiction. This is to

suggest that the author as individual is exposed, while in the process of artistic creation, to the influence of the ideology of his own time with all its diversity and "richness". This might cause some contradictions to come into being in the artistic creation especially if an author's humanism is thoroughly choked by capitalistic "falsification" of the author's own ideology. I will analyse the "voices" which are "twisted" together in order to produce (reproduce?) the character of Dean Jocelin in the novel.

Since the issue of the different voices which make up a fictional piece is difficult to discuss, I will first clarify it by quoting Barthes who comments very interestingly on the "dissociation" of voices in fictional discourse. In his essay "The Death of the Author", Barthes takes the following sentence from Sarrasine by Balzac: "This was woman herself, with her sudden fears, her irrational whims, her instinctive worries, her impetuous boldness, her fussings, and her delicious sensibility."<sup>14</sup> Then he goes on to analyse the identity of the speaker:

Who is speaking thus? Is it the hero of the story bent on remaining ignorant of the castrato hidden beneath the woman? Is it Balzac the individual, furnished by his personal experience with a philosophy of woman? Is it Balzac the author professing "literary" ideas on femininity? Is it universal wisdom? Romantic psychology? We shall never know, for the good reason that writing is the destruction of every voice, of every point of origin. Writing is that neutral, composite, oblique space where our subject slips away, the negation where all identity is lost, starting with the very identity of the body writing.<sup>15</sup>

Although Barthes's passage is very illuminating in shedding light on the variety of voices which go into the making of not only fiction but writing in general, it seems to me to despair too easily of the success of locating if not all at least some of these voices. In a diametrically opposed direction and in what might genuinely be termed "The Revival of the Author", Anthony Burgess has the following to say about Shakespeare:

.... There is certainly a tradition that turns [John Shakespeare] into a butcher and has young William recapitulating the evolution of drama from bloody Sacrifice by making him kill the calves to the accompaniment of highflown speeches, as though he were Brutus and the little brutes all Caesars. Remember Hamlet:

POLONIUS: I did enact Julius Caesar; I was kill'd i' the Capitol; Brutus kill'd me.

HAMLET: It was a brute part of him to kill so capital a calf there.<sup>15</sup>

Although Burgess follows that with "this is all fancy, and we believe what we wish ...,"<sup>17</sup> there is no reason why Barthes's commentary should be "canonically" more correct and genuine than Burgess's. Moreover, we see Barthes dissecting the one Balzac into different voices, and then despairing of locating any one of them as if they did not actually already belong to one historical man called Balzac. The autobiographical essays we have of Golding will certainly be of help in making it possible to locate most of the "voices" that went into the making of 'The

Spire. One essay in particular, "Belief and Creativity", will certainly disperse the "mystery" behind this novel.

In this essay, Golding wages a particular war on reductionism and believes that three thinkers in the last hundred years or so, Marx, Darwin and Freud, either were or were made to sound reductionists:

It was at a particular moment in the history of my own rages that I saw the Western world conditioned by the images of Marx, Darwin and Freud; and Marx, Darwin and Freud are the three most crashing bores of the Western world. The simplistic popularization of their ideas has thrust our world into a mental straitjacket from which we can only escape by the most anarchic violence. These men were reductionist, and I believe ... I do indeed believe that at bottom the violence of the last thirty years and it may be the hyperviolence of the century has been less a revolt against the exploitation of man by man, less a sexual frustration, or an adventure in the footsteps of Oedipus, certainly less a process of natural selection operating in human society, than a revolt against reductionism, even when the revolutionary, or it may be the terrorist, does not know it.<sup>16</sup>

Reading this, one would wonder about the "correctness" of Golding's statements and whether what he describes was really or ultimately a revolution against reductionism. One would also wonder whether the revolutionary herself is really ignorant of what she is revolting against. But isn't there already in Golding's statement some confusion when he calls these thinkers "crashing bores" and in the same breath vindicates them by showing them as blameless since it is a matter of "simplistic" popularization of their ideas and not their own ideas? And does it not give Marx, for instance, a credit rather than obloquy to know

that because of the inexhaustibleness of his ideas and thoughts, the world is avenging itself on him by "simplistically" popularizing his ideas? However, we can detect from this passage the "rages" and "the most anarchic violence" that are "favoured" by Golding. Although my inquisitive note might sound satiric in this context, no criticism of Golding's own beliefs is intended. I quote Golding's passage merely to clarify the issue about contradictions and to show how different voices were closeted together to "create" The Spire.

still in "Belief and Creativity", we come to detect the "same" impulse which motivates Dean Jocelin in The Spire to act and react, namely, the belief in mysteries against all (material) evidence:

Again; it was a prime tenet of classical psychology at that time that imagination is the rearrangement of material already present in the mind. I knew something about imagination.... Suddenly, one evening I saw that I simply did *not* believe that tenet; and that my disbelief was as positive as the experience.... Seated one day on the stump of a tree in a beech forest it was borne in on me that the dialectical materialism before which we had all fallen down had feet of clay.... I formulated what I had felt against a mass of reasonable evidence and saw that to explain the near infinite mysteries of life by scholastic Darwinism, by the doctrine of natural selection, was like looking at a sunset and saying, "someone has struck a match".... We have diminished the world of God and man in a universe ablaze with all the glories that contradict that diminution.<sup>13</sup>

One way of getting a better understanding of Golding's attitude is to look into the nature of "the glories" and "the near infinite mysteries of life". Does Golding mean

by the glories the wonders of nature or does he mean otherwise what man has constructed all over the ages of buildings and edifices, including spires? If what is meant is the latter, then certainly there is no doubt that it is geometry and men's material labour which brought these glories into existence rather than faith alone. After all, Euclidian geometry and Pythagorean mathematics date back 300 B.C. and 600 B.C. respectively. In The Spire, we can detect exactly the same kind of argument that Golding engages in in his essay. The argument about reasonable evidence and how Jocelin is against it is "reproduced" in the novel as a real version of the real argument in the essay. The master builder is on the side of reason and he believes that "It stands to reason. Now we must stop building." (p. 83) But Jocelin's answer to this in his attempt to stand "against a mass of reasonable evidence" is stated two chapters later: "But then\_\_since when did God ask the chosen ones to be reasonable?" (p. 121) Following Jocelin's view itself, we will be able to understand later how God himself is made, in the novel that is, foolish and cruel. However, Golding himself seems to be confused about the link between belief and creativity:

For I am only a novelist during a fraction of my time. Nor can I illustrate the link between belief and story from the novel, the quotations to be of any use would be too long.... Argument, debate, exposition, can seem to come from the poet or novelist in his proper voice, voice of the householder, lover, begetter of children, traveller, swimmer, swindler, drunkard, libertine\_\_

whatever a man or woman may be; and then there will come another voice so that we hardly recognize it as the same or the person who uses it, a voice of authority, power.<sup>20</sup> (emphasis is mine)

In The Spire a new "ideology" is in the process of formation, an ideology that shimmers into being in front of our eyes. We see its embarrassments, joltings, struggles and at last its "miraculous" birth. Jocelin dies but a new mixture of "horror" and "joy" is born. We can detect the affinities between Golding's thinking in the above passage and that of Barthes in the sense that there are many voices to go into the making of fiction. Golding mentions another voice, the voice of power. But he does not explain in that philosophy how the power of truth can be detached "from the forms of hegemony, social, economic and cultural, within which it operates."<sup>21</sup> He does not realize that "truth is already power"<sup>22</sup> with Jocelin.

Golding's stumbling block seems to be his idealist message of love to humanity. This message is a cry against the inhumanity he sees ubiquitous in the world. He is right, of course, in thinking that lack of love and selfishness can be the causes of misery and unhappiness. But he does not dissect the problem any further. He states that: "With bad people, hating, unco-operative, selfish people, no social system will work. With good people, loving, co-operative, unselfish people, any social system will work."<sup>23</sup> Golding is absolutely right here but he does not explain how these people can become "good", "loving",

"co-operative", "unselfish" in the first place. Is Golding, for instance, trying to suggest in The Spire that all the characters, except Jocelin, are selfish, bad, hating and unco-operative?

Having explained Golding's "rage" against reductionism, it becomes easy to detect "the voice of authority" which creates the character of Dean Jocelin in the novel. This character represents very clearly the "anti-reductionism" which Golding calls for. Jocelin is the "natural" outcome of the burning desire to render "creativity" the only condition of the existence of things. Of all the characters, Jocelin is the only one who is endowed with "vision". No wonder then that we see all the other characters working with stone and looking for foundations. But Jocelin is not a "pure" character. He represents an amalgam of anger, repressed sexuality, the power of vision, anti-reductionism and contradiction itself. He is aptly described in the novel: "Some odd combination of causes was bringing Jocelin's blood to a rage." (p. 33)

I will draw a parallel here between the spire with its "apparent" lack of foundations and language itself as a medium of communication. I would suggest that Jocelin dies not because he cannot bear to look at the spire after it has been constructed but because in the materiality of the spire in front of his eyes, Jocelin's subjectivity is totally lost. The same thing happens in language. In the materiality of our expressions, that is, in the

possibility of their materialization on paper, the origin of these expressions is either lost or destroyed. In other words, the symbol (the spire) is the death of the thing (Jocelin himself). What Jocelin aspires to is the coupling of body with language, as it were. In this case, Jocelin will represent the body while his spire will represent language. As Eagleton remarks, it is part of the very nature of a sign to "absent" its referent.<sup>24</sup> It is precisely this fact which creates the contradiction in The Spire. The achievement of Jocelin's aspiration (the sign, the spire) necessarily means the death of the aspirant (the referent, Jocelin). In other words, desperation and aspiration constitute metaphorically the two sides of the same coin, the visionary and the vision. Jocelin's death becomes "inevitable" as soon as he "writes" his sign down, that is, as soon as he constructs his spire. Thus, contradiction is really at the basis of things in The Spire.

Golding himself falls victim to the thought that "glory" necessitates the existence of "faith". But in the novel, we see that kind of faith in its impurity, in its destructiveness and streaked with evil in the character of Dean Jocelin. Golding is certainly in favour of having that glory rather than remaining without it. Therefore, it is precisely in the nature of understanding what a "glory" is that his problem lies. This is what Golding says about The Spire:

The book is about the human cost of building the spire. Is the theme of the book something that is missing from it? In the book the protagonist forces through the building of the spire against all odds, not counting the cost to himself or anyone else because he thinks he does God's will. He does not think of beauty\_\_might never have heard of it. He only sees it part by part and when it is finished cannot bear to look at it because of the folly and wickedness the job forced on him. Only when he is dying does he see the spire in all its glory; and the sight reduces him to understanding that he had no understanding. Theme! What is a theme? Where was that one? Yet the book is simple as a book could well be. If the reader, the critic does not understand that after all the theology, the ingenuities of craft, the failure and the sacrifices, a man is overthrown by the descent into his world of beauty's mystery and irradiation, flame, explosion, then the book has failed. The theme is not there.<sup>25</sup>

What we clearly notice in this passage is a kind of descent from "the human cost", "folly" and "wickedness" towards a relaxation in a "world of beauty's mystery and irradiation, flame, explosion". There is almost a forcible coupling between two incompatible things, the human cost and the world of beauty's mystery. Golding's understanding of beauty and mystery is very similar to Yeats's "A terrible beauty is born". Moreover, his claim in the above quotation that Jocelin sees the spire in all its glory only when he is dying is not substantiated. Why, one would ask, does Jocelin in this case insist on the continuation of building the spire if he does not expect the glory to be there at the end? Jocelin asserts as early as chapter four (the novel is twelve chapters) that:

You and I were chosen to do this thing together. It's a great glory. I see now it'll destroy us of course.

What are we, after all? .... The thing can be built and will be built, in the very teeth of Satan.... They laugh at me, I think; and they'll probably laugh at you. Let them laugh. (p. 88)

We are told by Golding that the sight reduces Jocelin to understanding that he had no understanding. But we already know that the idea of building the spire is Jocelin's in the first place. Moreover, it is highly unlikely that a saint with Jocelin's calibre, extrasensory perception, and penetrating intelligence (as witnessed in the encounter between Jocelin and Roger) would really be reduced to understanding that he had no understanding. There will be no point in having this extrasensory perception if one is to be reduced to such a status. The only likelihood is that Jocelin does not believe in miracles himself although he preaches them to Roger Mason: "Yet your craft can find nothing certain, my son. You say they built a raft. Why not believe the building floats on it? It's simpler to believe in a miracle?" (p. 38) If it is really simpler to believe in miracles, why doesn't Jocelin himself believe that the building of the spire is a miracle? In his essay, "Jocelin's Folly; or Down with the spire", Laurence Lerner states his opinion very clearly: "The more we learn about the building of the spire, the more we can see it as a symbol of misplaced sexuality, self-aggrandisement, and social disintegration."<sup>25</sup>

It is clear to many readers and critics that Jocelin is not driven by a saintly drive but rather by an "ordinary" one. Power, which is usually associated with glory, is perhaps the sole unconscious motivation in The Spire where contradictions have to appear when "saintliness" is not really what is meant by the word. Beside this concept of power, I will show how Jocelin's sexual repression is not conducive to the building of the spire. In other words, this repression is not shown as real sublimation. If The Spire has any credit to greatness, it has to be "materially" dissected and its metaphysical concepts and mysteries critically illuminated. Doing so, the book with all its contradictions will be shown to contain a real social drama wherein the language of power, sometimes clad in mysteries, is always triumphant.

Since Golding is the first reader of his own novel, it is somewhat difficult for him to dissociate himself from a personal opinion. I will contend that we see the contradictions as clearly as we do because of Golding's heavy-handed manner in the sense of inserting the issue of faith and insisting on its significance in relation to glory. Jocelin's insistence cannot be shown as being there for its own sake. He has to have faith and he has to have love and joy for the others. The immediate question which presents itself to us is: Why not let Jocelin represent a truly saintly character? Does Golding have to complicate

matters by introducing sex and some literary "hoaxes" (gimmicks) such as the false angel?

The fact of the matter is that Jocelin cannot really be depicted as a saintly figure. The important reason behind this "impossibility" is that we will not be having in this case the ideological struggle otherwise prevalent in every dialogic situation in the novel. In other words, we will not be able to have The Spire in its present form. Portraying Jocelin as a "real" saint would certainly prevent the novel from being "novelistic" and would turn it into an epic of building a spire. As it is, the novel is fraught or charged with a minatory aspect of two ideologies struggling against each other: the ideology of power and faith and that of reasonable evidence and experimentation, although the latter will have in its own time its own "faith" and "power". The novel is an attempt, however unconscious, to expose a new ideology in the making. Jocelin is not an "epic" hero but rather a "novelistic" hero with all his tensions and inconsistencies. I am taking both words "epic" and "novelistic" in the Bakhtinian sense. We can see how Jocelin has to be somewhat "devilish" in order to be able to build the spire without the foundations. A true saint faced with the problem of no foundations would certainly not risk the lives of his workers. When we see the "dilemma" in this way, we begin to see Golding's point in

having to have a self-contradictory character. A different Jocelin will have to be sought in a different The Spire.

We can only reconstruct the character of Jocelin out of his "actual" utterances in his scenarios with other characters and his "asides" rather than from what Golding intended him to be outside the context of the novel. Jocelin's asides certainly throw many doubts on his saintliness. He is more easily understood as an "earthly" character driven by human desires. The nature of these desires can be reworked from his discourses in the novel. His glory as represented in the spire cannot be considered as glory for its own sake.

Jocelin represents not a "true" saint but rather what one might term a saint in the making. But to be even this, he must have the makings of a saint in him. But Jocelin's anger at the "adulterous" relationship between Goody Pangall and Roger Mason is not shown as saintly fervour. One can detect a sense of sexual jealousy in Jocelin's behaviour. One can also easily detect the ordeal which he undergoes and the persistent attempt to purify himself. Jocelin is described as always angry whenever he has a glimpse of Goody and Roger together:

[Roger] turned away, his back to Jocelin, as the north west door clashed behind Goody, he went to the ladder like a man sleepwalking. Then an anger rose out of some pit inside Jocelin. He had glimpses in his head of a face that drooped daily for his blessing, heard the secure sound of her singing in Pangall's Kingdom. He lifted his chin, and the word burst out over it from an obscure place of indignation and hurt. "No!".

(p. 58)

We are not sure as to why "an anger rose out of some pit inside Jocelin." It is not made clear, for instance, that he wants to take protective measures against fornication so that his "daughter in God", as he puts it, could be saved. This relationship between these two characters, Goody and Roger, assumes at times much more significance than the spire for Jocelin. We are told that Jocelin's eyes "were blinded by the vision of Roger and Goody Pangall." (p. 59) However, he does utter the words "Filth! Filth" (p. 60), but we do not know what the filth exactly is. But the narrator takes the reader in an inspirational moment into Jocelin's mind: "All at once it seemed to him that the renewing life of the world was a filthy thing, a rising tide of muck so that he grasped for air, saw the gap in the north transept and hurried through it into what daylight there was." (p. 58) The seriousness with which Jocelin pursues the matter of adultery throws some doubts on the naturalness of his reaction: "So Jocelin, the blood still beating in his head, tried to speak naturally to Pangall, and found himself as breathless as if he had run the length of the cathedral." (p. 60)

Having had our hopes raised about Jocelin's good intentions towards his "daughter in God" (p. 11), we are then faced with the most "problematic" intention on his

part. Jocelin looks at the relationship between the adulterous couple in a new light:

Somewhere, either over these tiles, or perhaps where the angel had been, or in the infinite dimensions of his head, there was a scene like a painting. It was Roger Mason, half-turned from the ladder, drawn by invisible ropes towards the woman crouched by the wall. It was Goody, half-turned, unblinking....  
 "She will keep him here." (pp. 63-64)

One of the forces in the narrative which makes Jocelin's character so repellent is this pathetic descent from lofty aims to very low "intentions". The words "filth, filth" which he utters only four pages earlier and which apparently signify the relationship between Goody and Roger turn out to be a suitable epithet for Jocelin himself. He is certainly willing, after all, to sacrifice his reformatory plans towards Goody, if he has any, for the sake of the spire by keeping his daughter in God as a bait to hook the master builder. We can see how the power of his obsession with the spire turns him into a character devoid of any human, lofty, respectable feelings whatsoever. And the insistence on building the spire even if it has any glory loses its significance. The utterance "she will keep him here" is of the kind that the end justifies the means. The glory turns gradually into an abstraction devoid of any meaning.

But Jocelin is tortured further by Satan who is represented, I would suggest, by Goody herself:

Only Satan himself, rising out of the west, clad in nothing but blazing hair stood over his nave and worked at the building, tormenting him so that he writhed on the marsh in the warm water, and cried out aloud. He woke in the darkness, full of loathing. So he took a discipline and lashed himself hard, seven times, hard across the back in his pride of the angel, one time for each devil. After that, he slept a dreamless sleep. (p. 65)

We notice the gradual transition from the problem of foundations which constitutes for Jocelin the primary obstacle into a more immediate problem of sexuality and fornication and dreams where the protagonist wallows in those phallic images, where the spire becomes a phallic symbol, and where the only way out of these impurities is by lashing himself hard and having a dreamless sleep.

It becomes difficult in this context to judge the kind of "odds" against which Golding claims his protagonist forces through the building of the spire. Are they sexual impediments and tortures, lack of foundations, or merely the fact that people die in the process of building the spire and that this could be condoned for the sake of "my place, my house, my people."? Jocelin certainly looks at the deaths with sufficient, almost aesthetic, detachment:

In this dark and wet, it took even Jocelin all his will, to remember that something important was being done; and when a workman fell through the hole above the air which was so thick it seemed to keep the scream as something mercilessly engraved there, he did not wonder that no miracle interposed between the body and the logical slab of stone that received it. Father Anselm said nothing in chapter; but he saw from the Sacrist's indignant stare how this death had been added to some account that one day would be presented. (p. 54)

The interesting narrative manoeuvre in this passage is the manner in which it prognosticates the future and prepares the reader for it. It is also interesting to notice that it is difficult to suggest whether there is any authorial intrusion here or whether "the voice of authority" is narrating itself by itself. But whatever the case is, the reader can now see how the contradictions are compounded.

The unconvincing circumlocution and the roundabout way with which Jocelin dialogizes with Pangall enhance my suggestion that the protagonist is motivated by power although it might be nominally disguised under the name of the spire. The unconscious tactics of absorption which Jocelin adopts and the persuasive way in which he tries to "con" Pangall into accepting what he is doing is a brilliant indicator of the means usually utilized by manipulators. The following dialogue between the two uncovers the effects of persuasive language on the opposite interlocuter:

"They are a trial to us all, my son. I admit it. We must be patient. Didn't you say once that this is your house? There was sinful pride in that, but also loyalty and service. Never think you aren't understood and valued, my son. Presently they will go. In God's good time you will have sons\_\_"

Pangall's sneer disappeared.

"The house they will have to guard and cherish will be far more glorious than this one. Think, man. In the middle of it this will stand up\_\_" and passionately he held out the spire\_\_ "and they will tell their children in their turn; "This thing was done in the days of our father."

Pangall crouched. He held his broom crossways and it quivered. His eyes stared and the skin was drawn back from his gleaming teeth. For a moment he stood like that, staring at the spire held out to him so enthusiastically. Then he looked up under his eyebrows.

"Do *you* make a fool of me too?"

(pp. 61-62)

What we have in this dialogue, Pangall being more accessible than other characters, is one of the most "brilliant" effects of persuasive language. The reader has just to read the sentences slowly to realize the high expectations and the glories which are to be reaped by and are in wait for Pangall. But we have to remember that this is a kind of rhetorical language in the sense that it is not the language of practical, immediate benefits (results) for Pangall. In this sense, this language benefits only its own user, Jocelin, in playing for more time and achieving the building of the spire. We notice how his language with its promised, absent referents, glories and children, typically removes the sneer from Pangall's face. It is the language of dreams, glories and future prospects. But we already know that the glory will be attached to Jocelin's name, the dean with the vision. Still on a higher level, all criticism of the novel itself is bound up with the protagonist's character. So Jocelin's language of faith is actually important in being capable of generating itself by itself simply because it has no "foundations" and it can have a "labyrinthine" store. Jocelin is actually described as a character which has the

makings of an orator. Disasters and calamities can simply be turned into figments of people's imagination the moment Jocelin speaks:

He preached in the churches of the city where he was archdeacon. In the Church of Saint Thomas, when he was high up, speaking from the pulpit in the triforium and half way down the nave—and the people stood below him, looking up, a half-moon of them—he found that he was talking about the spire urgently, softly striking his clenched fist on the stone desk. But the people moaned and beat their breasts, not because they understood him, but because he spoke so urgently; and because it was a time of rain, floods, death and starvation. (p. 66)

But Jocelin's concentration on God's work is not really a genuine one. It is only by forcing himself out of his obsession with Goody Pangall that he can turn his attention to the issue of the spire. It is an important matter to decide exactly the kind of concentration Jocelin shows to build the spire. Is it a real spirituality or the other kind of mortification of both the spirit and the body that brings Jocelin to continue with his mission? Scenes of his obsession with Goody recur more than once in the novel, something which clearly suggests not real spirituality but rather forced mortification of the body which in turn sheds light on the motive behind the construction of the spire:

"Her hair had come out into the light. It hung down; on this side splayed over her breast in a tattered cloud of red..." (p. 90), "there was a fall and tangle of red hair on green cloth, with the stone of the pillar behind it" (p. 91), "so he would try to recreate the woman and the secure time, but find himself looking at the red hair instead." (p. 91)

The reader is not told why Jocelin wants to recreate the woman and the secure time. This leitmotif of the red hair does not stop here but goes on to be more mysterious:

"... and Goody Pangall was to be glimpsed far off at the end of an aisle, wimpled head down, a woman about her work, the red hair hidden" (p. 97), "so she irked him, and her red hair irked him, and he felt nothing about her but compassion for her shame, and a strange disquiet." (p. 99)

Besides the issue of sexuality, there is the issue of power. Jocelin's power exercised over Pangall and many other characters is itself overruled by a higher power. Jocelin faces what seems to him like a trial: "That's it, he thought. Why didn't I think of it before? I'm on trial." (p. 167) The seven men who question Jocelin have a special authority: "'By the authority of this seal, I command you to return to your own house". It was gently, kindly spoken; but when he had inspected the seal, he knew that at last he had no answer." (p. 170)

Added to the division of power which we see in the novel, there is an indication in Jocelin's society of how a certain punitive, penal, or disciplinary system works. Jocelin devolves his authority upon Roger so that the latter can use it to punish the drunk man. There is no investigation, however, into the causes behind the drunk man's situation. He is simply to be punished:

A great anger swamped Jocelin, rage at the drunk man in the gutter and the sot in the Three Tuns. He cried out to Roger's averted face.

"My son! You must use my authority. Send a man on a good horse to the Three Tuns. Let him take a whip with him, and let him use it as necessary!" (p. 110)

Whipping is not alien, however, to Jocelin's way of thinking. We have already seen him on page 65 taking a discipline and lashing himself hard, seven times, so that he can get a "dreamless sleep".

However, one of the most important aspects about The Spire is Golding's use of brilliant images at the end of the novel to gain the reader's sympathy for Jocelin. Jocelin suddenly seems to command our attention and sympathy after all the deaths that are caused through him. The descriptive language in The Spire is seductive in almost "forcing" us to sympathize with Jocelin. This is achieved through the protagonist's confession that he is mistaken and therefore he asks forgiveness: "I beg you. No forgiveness for this or that, for this candle or that insult. Forgive me for being what I am." (p. 203) Later on: "I injure everyone I touch, particularly those I love. Now I've come in pain and shame, to ask you to forgive me." (pp. 210-211) Forgiveness becomes a very significant gesture if the "not christian souls" could afford to show it to Jocelin: "Nor did Father Adam understand how necessary it was to have forgiveness from those who were not christian souls; nor how for that it was necessary to

understand them; nor how impossible understanding them was." (p. 203)

This issue of understanding is perhaps the most important theme in the novel. It is certainly linked to the concept of "self" stretched to its limit. Jocelin is reduced to understanding that he had no understanding, but not for the reasons which Golding mentions above. A very important message from Golding is conveyed to the reader through Jocelin: "Do you know, my children? The spiritual is to the material, three times real!" (p. 193) It might be true that the spiritual is to the material, three times real, but neither the author, the narrator, nor Jocelin himself is capable of locating where exactly the "spiritual" lies. Jocelin wonders at the end: "What holds it up, Roger? The nail? Does she, or do you? Or is it poor Pangall, crouched beneath the crossways, with a sliver of mistletoe between his ribs?" (p. 212) It is only in this way that the material takes revenge. The concept of historical materialism should not be confused with a vulgar notion of materialism as mere possession of things. If Jocelin does believe in miracles, there is no reason why he should be reduced to understanding that he had no understanding. Jocelin cannot purify his soul by lashing his flesh. But as Marx put it, it is a matter of ascending from earth to heaven. What kills Jocelin is the contradiction which is compounded in front of his own eyes. Jocelin's spiritual vision cannot be materialised

except in matter (the spire itself). The nail which is the last piece to be fitted to the spire is itself material.

But let me explain the main contradiction in different terms. It is clear that the spire can be seen as a "signified" and the workers as "signifiers". But I will emphasise that the spire is the product of the workers. In other words, the signified is a product of those signifiers rather than a given "natural" transcendental meaning of them. This signified is produced through the material work of the signifiers which are in this case pushed back into the background by the stubborn Jocelin. But if the workers believe in the material (foundations) and if the spire itself also represents the material (the finished product), how could Jocelin (whose own vision (spiritual) can only be materialised in the spire (material)) possibly prove that the spiritual is to the material three times real? The fact that the spire (built with stone) still stands at the end stands in complete contradiction to Jocelin's own dictum. That is why he is reduced to understanding that he had no understanding. It is not faith which triumphs at the end but materialist philosophy.

At the end of the novel, the reader herself is left to float in a metaphysical guess as to how things in this world tend to work: "*Where was I then? ... Nowhere.*" (p. 217) We gradually move in the narrative towards issues which inhabit other fictions by Golding. In contrast to

Jocelin's "knowledge" in the first half of The Spire, we see him reduced to total ignorance and a severe state of confusion: "Now\_\_I know nothing at all." (p. 223) We move through a journey of confusion and contradiction not only for the author but for the narrator, the protagonist, and finally for the reader who is invited seductively and from time to time to share in some of the "convictions" which the novel brings about. It is because of this reason that the narrative assumes a decentring role for all the partners who process it into being. And indeed, Jocelin does admit at the end that he needs more than one "tongue" to say more than one thing at once: "I need three tongues to say three things at once." (p. 214) Significantly, two of these tongues are used to express the material and the spiritual aspects of life.

But once again, Jocelin is plagued precisely by what his predecessor, Mountjoy, is plagued by before him, namely, the ceaseless proliferation of signifiers. The whole of language cannot be present to Jocelin when he speaks, because he would not be able to articulate anything at all: "He said almost nothing, because speech was so complex, even when you only had access to one mouth." (p. 218) Jocelin must learn to exclude the other as Other if he is to enter the symbolic realm of language. As long as he refuses to do that, Jocelin will remain a child in the mirror-stage, a child which finds reflected back to itself in the mirror a gratifyingly unified image

of itself. For Jocelin, a blurring of subject and object still obtains: "My place, my house, my people." (p. 8) In this sense, Jocelin, like Mountjoy, remains a child. That is why his vision is a "childish" vision:

His head swam with the angels, and suddenly he understood there was more to the appletree than one branch. It was there beyond the wall, bursting up with cloud and scatter, laying hold of the earth and the air, a fountain, a marvel, an appletree; and this made him weep in a childish way so that he could not tell whether he was glad or sorry. (pp. 204-205)

Jocelin's dilemma is that he stretches the limit of spirituality in an undertaking unknown to his own "self". The Spire is certainly an assault on materialism. But we still have to ask the question: "Where does Jocelin end?" Perhaps the following scene will make things clearer:

But that noise was consumed in a storm of voices, all shouting and laughing and making hound noises. He got up by the wall, but the noises swirling round him, brought hands and feet and dim faces at his own. He glimpsed a dark alley and pushed himself at it while the clothing tore on his back. He heard his gown rip; he could not lie down for hands held him up. The noises began to bray and yelp. They created their own mouths, fanged and slaving. He cried out.  
 "My children! My children!" (p. 215, emphasis is mine)

The fact of the matter is that it is Jocelin who becomes their child: "for hands held him up." Jocelin's struggle is towards taking the first step into "real" manhood. In a way, all Golding's protagonists are children who unashamedly plunge themselves into their unconscious sexual desires and ask embarrassing questions. Moreover,

they all show that kind of aggressiveness (rage) which Melanie Klein discerns in the infant which entertains fantasies of tearing its mother's body to bits and which suffers delusions that this body will in turn destroy it.

In a desperate attempt to clear the confusion, Jocelin's own folly and cruelty are displaced and shouldered on God's own back: "The net isn't mine, Roger, and the folly isn't mine. It's God's Folly.... Roger\_\_ He isn't needlessly cruel, you know." (pp. 121-22) We have seen in The Spire a representation of a society smitten by death, starvation and floods on the one hand and many contradictions on the other. The combination of all these things is certainly reflected in Jocelin's character: "I'm a compendium" (p. 210) In this chapter, I tried to shed light on Golding's personal beliefs in an attempt to show their influence particularly on The Spire and to show how it is difficult to "create" or "construct" literary works in general as castles in the air.

## NOTES

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## Chapter Six

### The Paper Men: Homelessness at Home

"... never has freedom of movement stood in greater disproportion to the abundance of means of travel."<sup>1</sup>

(Walter Benjamin)

"This century, for all its wealth and with all its communication systems, is the century of banishment."<sup>2</sup>

(John Berger)

"At last I was kitted out but still I didn't climb on a plane. It wasn't a lack of mobility. I was able to move, though like an old man. I mean really old, not just in the upper end of the sixties. It was fear. I wanted to go quote home unquote\_\_oh how I wanted! But I was afraid of England and the spring." Wilfred Barclay: The Paper Men

"Man must not be stifled under paper."<sup>3</sup>

(William Golding)

The Paper Men(1984), Golding's ninth novel, was published a few months after he was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature. At the age of 73, Golding comes up with a professional piece of literature about a man who is himself a writer and who himself dabbles at rites of passage. But although the novel is, as I will attempt to show, highly interesting and intriguing about the issues it raises, the fact that its subject is a writer who tries to evade a biography written of him (p. 99) weakens for some critics the whole argument of the narrative and distracts these critics from the real issues. Golding is certainly not to blame for choosing a subject like this for his novel. The blame lies with the critics while Golding states very clearly that: "The writer does not

choose his themes at all. The themes choose the writer."<sup>4</sup> It is very interesting to notice the implication such a comment suggests. Golding certainly "allows" the social rather than the individual to decide his themes, although his comment would probably be judged differently on the evidence of most of his novels.

The story of The Paper Men concerns Wilfred Barclay, a novelist pursued by an American academic seeking to write his biography. In this process, Barclay tries to avoid the pursuer apparently because he has something to hide about his past life. The pursuit, however, continues and the time-span of the whole story is about ten years. Barclay turns from the pursued into the pursuer (p. 81) and he tries to make life as difficult as possible for Rick L. Tucker, the American academic. In the end Tucker shoots Barclay.

The narrative technique in The Paper Men poses a problem for most readers and critics alike. The events are narrated by the first-person narrator, the novelist Barclay himself. The continuous shift between the past and the present is confusing and sometimes disturbing, but Redpath in his article "What the water said: plot, sub-plot and criticism in The Paper Men" describes the chronology very succinctly:

.... As with Free Fall and Rites of Passage, what we are presented with in The Paper Men is a writer writing. This gives us an insight into the chronology of the text. Barclay is writing in an immediate present which occurs on page 190: "Which brings us

right up to today." He is writing about the last ten years or so of his life, that is, from Tucker at the dustbin to page 190. This is the near past. Inside this near past there is also Barclay remembering his far past from childhood up to Tucker at the dustbin. We therefore have three chronological layers: the immediate present\_\_the time of writing, the near past\_\_Tucker at the dustbin to Barclay's decision to "disappear into comfort and security" (p. 190), and the far past\_\_Barclay's childhood to his fame as an author.<sup>5</sup>

It would appear at first sight that The Paper Men deals tenaciously with the individual without allowing the social to come into play. As we detect from Redpath's description, everything in the story has to do with the novelist Barclay alone. This, indeed, has encouraged many reviewers to judge the novel as a failure simply because Barclay who is almost everything in the book is seen to be a "bad" character. How then do we solve the apparent problem of individualism in The Paper Men and its contextual "socialness"?

The Paper Men, it must be mentioned, met with a largely unfavourable reception from most reviewers and readers. The reason why this was and perhaps still is so will be examined in the following pages. I will attempt to show the "merits" and "demerits" of the book by exposing different points of view. Although the exposition of why the novel was received unfavourably will relate all the issues, technical and contentual, together, I will attempt to separate them and try as much as possible to locate the original misunderstanding between Golding and his readers

in the former's own philosophy of the "nature" of man and the limits of the universe. The exposition of Golding's view on the evidence of his essays and writings will certainly throw light on many vague points in The Paper Men. However, my main aim in this chapter is to throw light on one of the most subtle contradictions that The Paper Men embeds. It is clear that what Wilfred Barclay is faced with is the problem of homelessness. He feels at home only when he is not at home or he feels homeless precisely when he is at home. The above quotations from Walter Benjamin and John Berger relate appropriately to what we see in The Paper Men of banishment and the contradiction implied in both quotations of the abundance of means of travel and the lack of freedom of movement. The Paper Men charts graphically the psychological malaise of the twentieth century. Partly for this reason, it is the most subtle and in some ways the best of Golding's novels and it is paradoxically for that same reason the least understood by critics and readers. For the first time, Golding seems to deal with the "essential" contradictions in the psychological and mental lives of the twentieth-century people.

Barclay is at once an empty character and a sharp observer of that emptiness. The fact that he knows about his emptiness creates a contradiction since it is unlikely that a man who knows a lot about emptiness would himself be empty. But critics dissect Barclay's "empty" character

and show their disbelief that Golding could possibly have written such a book in the first place about such an empty character. These critics completely miss the point by concentrating on the individual rather than on the society of which Barclay is certainly a product. We will see in The Paper Men some important issues tackled very cleverly by Golding. In this novel, Golding manages to introduce his own wonder about the creation of novelistic characters, their worth or otherwise, the importance or otherwise of literary criticism, the pursuit of the unreadable, the power of money to distort human relationships and other themes. In other words, Golding manages in the shortest of his novels to dissect society almost completely and to blend sadness with comedy as we see them in reality. However, there are some ironies involved in the creation of a novelist like Barclay in the sense that there are moments when it is difficult to disentangle the "creation" of Barclay from that of the real author.

In this chapter, I will discuss the important aspects of the relation between the writer and the public, that is, writing, experience, and criticism. I will also discuss the theme of banishment which will uncover some features of the bourgeois society in which Barclay writes and within which those social features are seen as the major contributor to the kind of writing Barclay produces. But I will stress from the beginning that no direct

parallel is to be drawn between Golding the creator and Barclay the creation. There are issues which seem to carry the Golding stamp on them as there are other issues which are completely "Barclayan" and which at the same time contribute to his condemnation as a "second-rate novelist". If the different, although related, issues of writing, experience, criticism, and the theme of banishment are to be compressed together into one larger theme, it will certainly be the dislocated subjectivity and the search for a fuller one.

I will start by concentrating on the relation between potential creativity and actual confrontation with social relations that help in a commodified society to stifle that creativity and turn it into intellectual impoverishment. We will be able to detect the kind of "appreciation" of what Wilf considers as literary:

.... There were things, mantic moments, certainties, if you like, whole episodes that had blazed, hurt, been suffered for\_\_and they were wasted. I had written them, I saw, for nobody but myself, who had never reread them. The conference had operated in the light of certain beliefs. One was that you can understand wholeness by tearing it into separate pieces. Another was that there is nothing new. The question to be asked when reading one book is, what other books does it come from? I will not say that this was blinding light\_\_indeed, what are academics to do?\_\_but I did see what an economical way there was for me to write my next book. I did it there and then, living by the shores of Lake Trasimene. I did not need to invent, to dive, suffer, endure that obscurely necessary anguish in the pursuit of the\_\_unreadable. (pp. 24-25)

In this passage, we notice the transition from those episodes that had been suffered for to a situation where Wilf does not need to suffer. In an attempt to produce something readable, he abandons what is most important for him, the genuine experience which is responsible for the mantic moments and certainties. In order to be accessible to his readership, Wilf no longer endures that obscurely necessary anguish in the pursuit of the unreadable. But the result is that his writing in its descent from the obscure becomes commodified and thus easier to consume and dissect. The novelist Wilf is then restricted by his readers. In her comment on The Paper Men, Eva Figes calls Wilf a second-rate novelist but she does not develop this description any further to cover the kind of readers he is writing for.<sup>6</sup> The kind of writer Wilfred Barclay becomes is heavily satirized in Golding's own writing. The latter's idea of the real novelist, as we discern it from his autobiographical and literary articles, lays much emphasis on creativity and imagination, aspects which Wilf as a writer damagingly lacks. But it must be emphasised that this lacking, on the evidence from the passage above, is a gradual process from those mantic moments which Barclay suffers for to a situation where those same precious, creative moments are made redundant in Barclay's society. This is precisely where the contradiction lies. Barclay's "empty" writing has as its content the theme of emptiness. It is precisely through this concentration on

the individual writer that Golding highlights the social determinants of the situation.

What we ultimately have in Barclay is a writer with no imagination at all, a writer who falls back heavily on concrete objects presented immediately through seeing rather than imagining. In his attempt to become the pursuer and to write about Tucker, Barclay reaches the conclusion: "All the time, over breakfast then dressing, I was busy putting together what I knew of him and realized at last that it amounted to less than the police would want for a description." (p. 79) We notice also that the idea of "selection" is important for Wilf. Instead of creating through imagination a whole character that is alive, the mechanism of selection is at hand for him, and he manages to sketch what is only ordinary and hackneyed by everyday experience. He tells the reader about the novelist's truism:

Then, of course, the novelist's truism popped out. It was no good putting the real, live Rick L. Tucker in a book. He had this in common with most of the human race\_\_he was quite spectacularly unbelievable. There are things that novelists invent which they call characters but they aren't. They're constructs, shaved down out of some wood or other\_\_a psychic plasma\_\_ into figures as like each other as Russian dolls. The only thing I could do was select, tone down, adjust, produce a comically loathsome figure, recognizable and tolerable because it was "only a story". It came to me\_\_ and with an eighth glass of water\_\_that I must do what I had never done before in my life. No more invention, only selection\_\_I must actually study a living person. Rick should become my prey.

(pp. 78-79)

This passage is typical of the contradiction Barclay falls victim to. In the second sentence, he says that it was no good putting the real, live Tucker in a book. But in the penultimate sentence, Barclay emphasises that he should actually study a living person. Barclay falls into this contradiction because he is a "genuine" writer who is later transformed into a "second-rate" novelist because of the social determinants. Barclay's transformation "reflects" a social transformation. To judge an individual in isolation from society is to misjudge that individual. What is important about The Paper Men is not whether Wilfred Townsend Barclay, already a fictional character, is a good man or a bad man. The significance lies in the shaping of this character. In other words, what is important is the form rather than the content. Whether Barclay uses nasty language in his discourse and drinks too much alcohol is beside the point. William Golding goes beyond this issue to concentrate rightly on more significant issues which concern a writer. The narrative of The Paper Men revolves around the issues of experience, criticism, and the metaphoricity of language:

However, I survived that state and began attempts to relearn a foreign language, the one I am using now. For a time I stuck to single syllables and it was quite interesting or would have been had I not still had the strain inside me, turning me up, I thought, like a steel violin string\_\_would I were catgut to snap and be done with, that's what I thought, having early in life recognized that ninety-nine per cent of this language is metaphor and now having suspicions about the odd one per cent. (p. 126)

Golding is involved once again in raiding the unconscious in The Paper Men. Dreams, the mechanism by which we can know something about our unconscious repressed desires, are assigned a significant place in the novel: "I dreamed a lot which is supposed to be healthy, but I remembered my dreams which healthy or not is unusual with me." (p. 69) Barclay is plagued by the the fact that all language is metaphorical. He searches indefatigably for the black hole, which I would suggest represents the truth: "Black hole there might be, but the first thing a bitterly sobering man would do would be to probe it, find a light to shine here and there until the hole was seen to be no more than a case of forgetfulness that must increase with the advance, year by year, of middle age." (p. 9) Golding believes that: "Always the truth is metaphorical." But if the truth is really always metaphorical, it might be difficult to find it. In The Paper Men, there is an analogy between language and the unconscious. We will see later that metaphoricity is the only aspect they share between them.

But having decided that all language is metaphorical and by implication taking this to be an indication of the impossibility of finding the truth, Barclay sticks to his principle of selection: "Mostly the writer deals with the bits of his characters that stick out." (p. 79) In his attempt to catch what sticks out in Tucker's character,

Barclay is finally in a position to judge that Tucker "had more black hairs in his right nostril than the left. He was right nostrilled." (p. 82) Actually Barclay is overwhelmed by this "truth" about Tucker: "How much hair could the novelist get away with? Not quite so much\_\_ the bit down the front, the mop of black hair on his head, the eyebrows and eyelashes would be more than enough." (p. 79) However, this selection can be ironical as I mentioned earlier in the sense that it is difficult to distinguish between the character and the real author in this process of selection.

The last resort for Wilf is luck: "It was sheer luck I knew he was shaggy between the legs as a Shetland pony." (p. 79) Wilf's description of Tucker, then, is simply a narration of the peripheries and superficialities of the latter's body:

Hands, square, fat, white, the backs inevitably sprinkled with the standard Tuckerish hair. And so clean. Far too clean, the nails very nearly convex rather than\_\_hell, which was which? They were dished, would hold rain water. (p. 80)

We can easily notice that this kind of communication is a self-condemning act since Wilf himself falls victim to the uselessness of the information he has got on Tucker: "hell, which was which?" However, there is a deeper side to Tucker's character, a side which could well be described as a stable meaning and which Barclay in his implicit belief in the impossibility of finding the truth

seems to be nervous about. This deeper meaning is itself, however, provoked metaphorically in the deeper meaning of the stream of falling water. Tucker is seen differently by Barclay:

"I mean\_\_isn't there something real queer about the sound?"

"No."

"Listen again."

It was true. The stream, a single skein of falling water briefly interrupted by the path, had two voices, not one. There was the cheerful babble, a kind of frivolity as if the thing, the Form, enjoyed its bounding passage downward, through space. Then running under that was a deep, meditative hum as if despite the frivolity and surface prattle the thing sounded from some deep secret of the mountain itself.

"It's not just single!"

"Yeah! 'Two voices are there, one is of the deep\_\_" I looked at him with surprise that turned to an unwilling degree of respect. There had been last night\_\_and now this. (p. 83)

It is very interesting to see the dichotomy of the Form and the depth underlying it. The Paper Men itself seems to be an example of both the Form and the inner meaning. What we will see done by some critics of this novel is precisely a critique of Barclay as a bad novelist and of the interlocking hate relationship between a third-rate academic and a second-rate novelist. Barclay does represent a second-rate novelist, but this fact should not necessitate a rejection of the novel itself as an inferior literary work. We shall see later how some critics confused the character of Wilf itself with the composition or creation of the novel as a literary work. The fact of the matter is that not only is The Paper Men a reminder

that we do have people like Wilf in real life but that it is also an urgent plea to open our eyes to the real creative powers of man. The fragmentation in The Paper Men is not the fragmentation of William Golding himself.

The narration takes mostly the episodic form and this fact itself reflects the narrator's drunkenness: "I have to remember in scenes as if I had reels of film with great gaps." (p. 155) This is a clear reminder of Pincher Martin when he emphasises that he is an album of snapshots. Golding summarises our human condition in a few words when he declares that "... we are in the age of the fragment and wreckage, those timbers, it may be, washed up on some wild seashore."<sup>2</sup> The inner meaning of the novel is bound to be missed by those critics who hasten to judge Golding's endeavour by the type of character he chooses to write about. But Golding is more realistic than these critics seem to think. He certainly portrays a society where "bestsellers", novels written mostly by second-rate novelists, seem to compete in a commercial race for the market place.

Golding is highly aware of our need for creative imagination. We have seen in the introduction how he expresses his fear, which coincides with that of many in the West, that the wells of creativity are running dry. What Barclay is endowed with is not a resourceful imagination but a special kind of "internationalism" which becomes his way of life. He resorts to plagiarism instead

of imagination when he decides to steal an idea from a friend's manuscript: "But the thing was that the central idea in my fourth novel *was exactly the good one hidden in Prescott's awful manuscript!*" (p. 111) However, it is not enough to see Barclay as a writer without creative imagination. There is a hint that any hope cherished by Barclay about writing a "good" book might be killed in such a society. He declares that what he steals for his book is the good idea in another writer's manuscript. perhaps we can look at the matter from a different perspective. Perhaps it is the society itself which creates a writer like Barclay. A revolutionary writer with a resourceful imagination is more likely to be driven underground, as it were, in such a bourgeois society which cannot live on revolutionary, imaginative ideas. It is only in this way that we can say that the kind of despair this writer, Barclay, meets with is at large social desperation. There is perhaps a necessary paradox in such a bourgeois society in the sense that a second-rate novelist is more likely to be made famous than a really imaginative, revolutionary writer. We cannot consider the shaping of Barclay's career as a writer as personally shaped. This is of course not to excuse such writers as Barclay but rather to discern the social determinants in a society through such writers.

The fear which the capitalist billionaire, Halliday, instills in Barclay's heart is absolutely clear: "I

thought too that I'd better learn a bit about Halliday, since he must be behind the whole operation. I didn't like the reference to his *power*. I began to have nightmares." (p. 102, italics in the text) What counts in the literary field in such a society is not quality but how many novels each novelist has got to his/her name. By quality I mean the fiery imagination which will break free from the restrictive measures and rules of that society's impoverished reason. Of course this bourgeois, capitalist society has its own quality which is likely to "sustain" a particular ideology. In Barclay's society, the apex of the "literary" pyramid is occupied by the capitalist, Billionaire, Halliday, whose pastime is collecting literary biographies. Neither the reader nor Barclay himself is able to see the face of this capitalist: "For the page that should have contained Halliday's entry was bare, bare, bare, just blank, white paper!" (p. 159) I am reminded here by what David Punter says about capitalism as a hidden oppressor: "Compared with feudalism, capitalism is often seen as a phantom oppressor, hidden within mystery, refusing to show its face in the daylight and wreaking violence by surreptitious means."<sup>3</sup> This invisibility has its own effect on Barclay and almost drives him mad when he no longer differentiates between dream and wakefulness. He is persistently haunted by Halliday.

But Halliday's power is not related directly to the literary field. It is exactly what lies behind that power which matters. It is summarized in the concept of money. In Halliday's world, even the "natural" sexual relationships are perverted through the supply of cash: "The billionaire, Halliday. Mary Lou admired him evidently, in her innocence. Wealth is a secondary sexual characteristic, like talent, like genius." (p. 99) Money itself becomes the desired goal the achievement of which takes place precisely through producing "popular" literature which sells in the market:

Fortunately Coldharbour kept on selling, as it still does, to say nothing of All We Like Sheep, and money was no problem. Niether, at that time, was invention, for I saw, leafing through the papers from the conference, that I had no need of it. (p. 24)

Barclay's tone is certainly satiric judging by the title of his book, All We Like Sheep. He is also aware of the need for imagination. But money becomes the key to solve all social problems including sexual ones. Social relations are directly governed by money in a way which dehumanizes individuals. Money can buy every "thing" even women: "Billions. Trillions. Mary Lou is interested in astronomy. Quadrillions. Money enough to start the Big Bang. Able to buy Mary Lou not with the little limbs of Paris." (p. 109) With the enticement of power, nearly all the characters are displaced. They are portrayed as subjects chasing a stolen subjectivity. We realize, then,

why money becomes important for Barclay. It becomes paradoxically a means by which he can restore in such a society his stolen subjectivity (chased by Tucker):

"I know you aren't interested in literary history, Wilf, after all, you're part of it\_\_\_"

"I'm not interested in history, period. It should be rolled up like a scroll. Halliday! I want more Halliday!"

"For example he'd pay anything for that." (p. 140)

Barclay finds himself in a serious dilemma when he cherishes the prospects of a biography written of him: "I feared to be the object of a biography. At the same time I was\_\_no matter how hard I tried not to be\_\_I was flattered by the possibility." (p. 99) It is precisely this fear which causes Barclay to turn into a cruel pursuer of Tucker. A kind of tension is built up within him because of the reputation which this biography would bring him. The tension is caused because of those "bad" moments in his life which he wants to hide but which would constitute for Tucker and Halliday precisely the juicy bits about Barclay's life. We have seen this kind of tension in different forms in Golding's earlier novels: Ralph and Jack; Mountjoy in his relation to Miss Pringle and Nick Shales; Pincher Martin in his attitude towards Nathaniel.

In his attempt to locate his precarious subjectivity as a writer, Barclay tries to play God in his own narrative, an attempt which fails at the end. This failure is perhaps the result of the inherent contradiction which the

position of God entails. Is God insecure and egoistic in giving freedom to man with one hand only to snatch it back with the other? Wilfred Barclay is an egoistic character:

"You are disgusting, Wilfred Barclay."

"And later on, years later. Look at that hand! I was hypnotized. I mean, I was literally, professionally hypnotized. At a party it was and in my, my\_\_"

"Oh, I, I, my *my\_\_*"

"Will you listen? Yes. Egotism...."

(p. 20)

However, it looks as if this scene is somewhat laboured to "prove" to the reader directly that Barclay is an egoistic character. But certainly no one would be able to speak at all if every time they uttered the pronouns "I" and "my" they will be described as egoistic. Barclay is described satirically by his wife, Elizabeth, as the whole of the universe:

"I found I was part of the universe, that's all!"

Her laughter went eldritch.

"You're not *part* of it, you sod! You're the whole bloody lot! Here am I\_\_"

(p. 173)

Barclay does not seem to win with any character. Even his recognition that he finds that he is part of the universe is not acceptable to his wife. There is of course a point that Golding wants to make here about egoism. Sometimes, however, it seems as if the treatment of this character is heavy-handed.

Barclay's dream of full subjectivity does not only appear in his attempt to dominate the narrative but also in his assiduous attempt to displace Tucker, Mary Lou, his

Italian friend, and his wife even literally. He usurps the right of narration not only as the first-person narrator but also in delineating other characters in the way he sees fit. But being utterly misled by his understanding of subjectivity, he falls victim to his own planning. By robbing other characters of their subjectivity, he simply contradicts himself in desiring to be a full subject. His own words about finding that he is part of the universe are negated by his actions. Barclay's displacement of other characters is shown both metaphorically and physically: "I slid my arm along the back of the seat.... She [Mary Lou] moved slightly away from me again.... Mary Lou slid right off the end of the bench." (p. 33) In other words, Barclay does not realize that his subjectivity can be found only when the subjectivity of the other characters is allowed to exist. By incorporating the Other into the Self, Barclay loses the self. Golding manages to lay bare the mechanism by which this bourgeois subject affirms its subjectivity.

Tucker is one of Barclay's victims in the latter's hunting project. He is completely humiliated by Barclay who seems to enjoy in an embarrassing scene the mixture of "ingratitude and sadism." (p. 91) Tucker is reduced to the status of a "good dog":

"Put it on the floor."

For the first time in my life I saw eyes literally fill with blood. There were blood vessels in the corners and they engorged. I thought for a moment that they might burst. Then he laughed with a kind of crack

and I laughed with him. I shouted yap yap at him and he shouted it back and we laughed and he put the saucer down on the floor laughing and he got on his knees having caught on and understood what was required of him. I could hear him lap it up.

"Good dog, Rick, good dog!" (p. 150)

But we must realize that for this embarrassing, humiliating scene to happen at all, Tucker should accept first to be reduced to the status of a good dog. If Tucker accepts to do that as he already does, then we must enquire about the reason behind his acceptance. Tucker is desperate for Barclay's signature which will enable him to write a biography of him. But we know from the text that the biography will be given to Halliday, the man who assigns Tucker to this project. We can see, therefore, that humiliation extends all over the social network rather than being restricted to one subject. Golding is again at his best in exposing such bourgeois relationships. But it is paradoxically this exposition, namely, showing Barclay's sheer bestiality and his egoistic narrative, which makes most reviewers dismiss the book as a failed attempt on Golding's part to produce a great literary work. I would argue that The Paper Men is a great novel. But perhaps Golding touches a sensitive chord in the hearts of some of those reviewers themselves by exposing such mechanisms. We already know that such things happen in bourgeois, capitalist societies. Golding is not fetching a strange theme from Mars.

What we see in the novel is not an attack on all novelists and critics, but rather an attack on a particular kind of novelist and critic: "he [Tucker] was on about my relative clauses. He had counted them, apparently, book by book." (p. 23) In his book, The Hidden Script: Writing and the Unconscious, David Punter comments very interestingly on the relationship between "theory and writing" on the one hand and "historical development" on the other. He writes:

It is not, of course, simply a matter of claiming that, in some contentual way, theory and writing "represent" historical development; but rather that the *forms* of historical development and technological change permeate all areas of the social text, and that this general text can only be interpreted in the light of wider changes in the actual situation of the subject in the West, and in the light of the social and political unconscious which is indissolubly though contradictorily wedded to these changes.<sup>10</sup>

In The Paper Men, the form itself is something new in Golding's own writing. Nowhere else in his narrative do we encounter a similar death of the narrator as we see it in this book. It is exactly the disintegration of character that we are presented with. And this disintegration of form "reflects" the loss of subjectivity as well as a further disintegration beyond this social text. Through his cruelty and bestiality, Barclay causes his own death, his wife's and the metaphorical death of Tucker. The latter loses because he does not get at last the required signature from Barclay. We must, then, go beyond the form

itself because "we cannot seek the interpretation of literature in literary terms alone."''

The claim that the "form" in this novel is intentionally "disintegrated" can be substantiated from the impurity of Barclay's language among other things. It is not so much disintegration as a raid on the bizarreness of the unconscious itself. And since dreams are important in helping us to understand something about the workings of the unconscious, they are given a special place in Barclay's narrative: "My dreams were about femininity *tout court*." (p. 69) Because Barclay rummages through the unconscious and gives free rein to his tongue to use whatever comes to it, the reader is given the impression that he is an "impolite" writer. The examples in the book are many where he uses "excremental" language:

"He is older than the church on which he shits" (p. 120), "surrounded, swamped, confounded, all but destroyed, adrift in the universal intolerance, mouth open, screaming, bepissed and beshitten, I knew my maker and I fell down" (p. 123), "*Tucker, Tucker the fucker*" (p. 149), "I wished to punish myself for the Dole and ordered a hideous concoction of my own which contains, among other things, Alka-Seltzer and Ferment Branca. In appearance it resembles diarrhoea" (p. 39), "*Be wary of Mary, don't be a prick with Rick*" (p. 35), "All day the knob of my cock wore itself raw against the waistband of my underpants." (p. 49)

It is obvious that the two primary operations of human language identified by Roman Jakobson, metaphor (condensing meanings together) and metonymy (displacing one on to another), are at work in these passages. These

two operations are also seen by some poststructuralists to work in the unconscious too. The unconscious is said to work by condensing "images" together and by displacing one image on to another in an endless metonymic chain of "signification". We will see in a moment that there is in The Paper Men itself an apt metaphor of the unconscious "in general". What keeps Barclay on the move is the fear that he will be caught by Tucker who is chasing him for the purposes of writing his biography.

Wilf's journey which is caused by persecution starts at "home" and ends also at "home". (The word "home" is put between inverted commas in the text itself, see page 20.) From the very beginning, we detect the fear that is going to haunt Wilf. We are told that he is searching for a pleasure different from the pleasure of the bottle:

I would fight the black hole, fight it on the beaches, in pubs and restaurants, clubs, bars, in travel, in the house, in the very damned delectable bottles themselves, hoping at last to find some pleasure without payment or, alternatively, a pleasure taken in calm, sober daylight rather than this stare so dry and hard\_\_I was frightened, I remember, in a deep, hard way, an appalled way. (pp. 8-9)

One of the causes of Wilf's flight from home becomes very clear when he tells us that: "The dawn-lit face of Professor Rick L. Tucker rose before me beyond the further rim. I ought to have been embarrassed for him but I wasn't. He had bored me and intruded, he had shown every sign of prying, of making a professional meal of me." (p.

11) The "direct" cause is stated clearly, and Wilf's life is being jeopardized. The narrative of the first chapter flows pleurably and at times humorously although the harbingers of evil are there. In straightforward narrative, Wilf conveys his idea of the difference between reality and what goes into the making of fiction. We see the meta-fictional device at work:

Beyond all the contrivances of paper, manipulations of plot, delineation of character, denouements and resolutions, there, in that real world, real dustbin, the quite implausible actions of individuals had brought into the light of day a set of circumstances I had thought concealed from the relevant person and finally disposed of. (pp. 14-15)

It is not enough to see the metafictional device, the self-consciousness of the narrative, at work, but it is more interesting to see the important analogy (metaphor) between the dustbin and the unconscious. The latter is almost completely reduced, metaphorically, to a dustbin. The implications of this analogy are very significant in a very specific way. We know that behind Elizabeth's separation from Wilf is the piece of writing found in a letter thrown in the dustbin. The first disaster, as it were, is caused directly through the dustbin. It becomes a symbol of fear the more Tucker rummages through it. Its significance is shown through Tucker's assiduous attempt to rifle it of its "important" contents, the hidden secrets. The analogy is finally closed by realizing that the search takes place in the darkness of the night which

indicates clearly the "darkness" of the unconscious in Wilf's mind. But what is more significant, I would argue, is the fact that the dustbin which signifies the unconscious signifies Barclay's own unconscious since it contains all the papers and secrets of his mind. That is why Barclay is frightened. We can see the horror of this discovery made by Tucker through the effect it will make on Wilf: "Listen, Tucker. Tomorrow you were leaving. I mean today. You are never coming back. Never, never, never, never, never." (p. 15) The relationship between Barclay and Tucker becomes a relationship between analysand and analyst respectively. Barclay tries to reverse this relationship when he decides to become the hunter: "Mindful of my new role as hunter, I nodded." (p. 81)

A second contrast is beautifully drawn between an inside and an outside. This time it concerns the relationship between what goes on in Wilf's mind and the outside world of nature. We have it described in vivid metaphoric language:

Sheer self-pity was filling the dark hollows behind my eyelids with water. Lucinda, Elizabeth, Tucker, the book that was going so badly\_\_the water spilled into my palms the way the blood had trickled out of Tucker. In the trees the dawn chorus was in full, joyous swing. (p. 15)

Tucker does not leave Barclay alone, and what seems comic in the first chapter turns almost inexorably into a

tragedy at the end: "The assiduity and humble determination that had seemed comic at first now seemed to threaten me like a disease." (p. 16) The comic scene in the first chapter with Wilf's discarded pyjama trousers and Tucker beside the dustbin is an occasion for some critics to describe the whole novel as "... a complex literary comedy from an extraordinarily powerful writer, which holds us ... right through to the end."<sup>12</sup> It is surprising to encounter such a comment on a book that ends with two deaths, those of Elizabeth and Wilfred Barclay, and a journey of homelessness and torture throughout the book. Wilf's journey continues, however, with the symbolism of the motorways and the concrete waste. With Wilf's description of the status of the world, we enter what resembles a waste land:

The relatively cheap but also efficient milieu of the motorway in every country, its spiritual emptiness, its pretence of shifting you to another place while all the time keeping you motionless on the same concrete waste\_\_that kind of internationalism became my way of life, my homeland if you like. (p. 26)

This passage is important in many ways. First, it is almost impossible to judge Wilf as an egoistic, bad novelist on the basis of this passage. What we see here is a genuine concern with the status of the world at large and the spiritual emptiness which surrounds it. Moreover, it sheds light on the issue of homelessness. Although we are given the impression that everywhere is like anywhere,

Barclay still wants, as we have seen earlier, to go quote home unquote. In other words, Barclay's universal internationalism is nervously laced with particular nationalism. The second point is that Eliot's "waste land" is invoked here. In fact, Eliot is invoked many times in the text. The words "Go! Go! Go!" (p. 22) are a reminder of the same words in Eliot's The Four Quartets. Eliot's name is mentioned twice on page 49. It could be said that The Paper Men is a modernist text in its coupling of the traditional and the bizarre in a way which creates an unresolved tension between the two:

I knew in one destroying instant that all my adult life I had believed in God and this knowledge was a vision of God. Fright entered the very marrow of my bones. Surrounded, swamped, confounded, all but destroyed, adrift in the universal intolerance, mouth open, screaming, beplissed and beshitten, I knew my maker and I fell down. (p. 123)

The text goes beyond the categorisation of good and bad people. Barclay is highly conscious of spiritual emptiness. As a writer and narrator, he is also highly aware of metafictional techniques. Moreover, there are many things which Barclay is right about. He is outraged, for instance, at the fact that he is endured for paper:

Right from the soles of my feet, through the drink and the vague, libidinous fantasy of ageing, there swelled feelings that overwhelmed everything else\_\_humiliation and sheer, unalloyed rage. To know myself accepted, endured not even as in honest whoredom, for money, but for paper! (p. 75, italics in the text)

There is already in this passage a hint that at the base of social relations, there is something which does not seem right. It is because of this consciousness and because Golding might want to smuggle a message or two about what is wrong in society that Barclay cannot be subjected to a thorough parodic treatment. Wilfred Barclay does share some views with his creator especially as we have seen about paper and about the metaphoricity of language. Also the important themes of rootlessness and homelessness are conveyed through the protagonist: "I came across the account of a solo voyage round the world by some sensible man\_\_sensible, I thought, because his voyage was like mine, an attempt to avoid everything." (p. 28) It is true that Barclay might be wrong about the sensibility of the other man for the reason he mentions, but what is important in this passage is the theme of rootlessness itself. We notice how the "universal" pattern of this kind of journey emerges slowly. It is a journey of disorientation which becomes international as time passes: "I shared the occasional meal with some international commuter as rootless as myself. I remember one time, when only a little drunk, I and a man I never saw again argued as to which country we were in and agreed to differ." (p. 28)

The fear that is caused by Tucker's attempt to pry into Wilf's personal life is increased as we have seen through the introduction of a third character into the scene of

events. One can argue here that Wilf might actually be frightened of the prospect of finding "nothing" rather than something to frighten him. In other words, it could be "nothingness" itself which frightens him. Mr Halliday who is introduced as a harmless character at first becomes the symbol of endless fear. At the same time we can see Wilf's opinion about rich men:

"Have I said anything\_\_?"  
 I poured myself more coffee and drank it in one gulp.  
 "No, no. Please go on. You are\_\_you are helping Rick."  
 "Well. There's Mr Halliday, you see."  
 "I don't know a Mr Halliday."  
 "He's rich. Real rich I mean. He's read your books. He likes them."  
 "It's nice when rich men can read." (p. 65)

The picture of Mr Halliday as a collector of butterflies begins to slide into focus from chapter VII onwards. But we never "see" his face: "... so whether unconscious or conscious, my dreaming mind flipped and I knew I was one of a series of butterflies that Mr Halliday had pinned into a showcase though the pin didn't hurt and I couldn't read the Latin name written under me." (p. 69)

In chapter IX, Wilf is engaged in a soliloquy wherein he is unremittingly haunted by Halliday. Here Wilf hints at the moral aspect of prying into the personal life of an author. It is an issue which is difficult to decide about. But Wilf certainly rejects the idea that Halliday or Tucker and his wife, Mary Lou, should make a meal of him:

But what's Mr Halliday going to say? From that point of view it's real unkind of Wilf. After all, we only

wanted to know about his past, particularly the juicy bits, and the occasional crime, let alone the infinite number of times he's made a private clown of himself, what makes him tick in fact. He's no right to hide any of that, hon. Why shouldn't we make a meal of him?

(p. 98)

Social relations in bourgeois society are clearly depicted through the characters of Halliday, Tucker, Mary Lou, and Wilf. The relationship between Halliday and Wilf represents the subject and the object in a hunting process. It clearly hinges on fear. Tucker and Halliday enter a different relationship of enslavement, while Mary Lou and Halliday embody the tactics of sexual perversion and a special kind of "pleasure" in a bourgeois society. Mary Lou is certainly represented as a victim:

"How long does he get Mary Lou for?"

"Mary Lou has ceased to mean anything to me, sir."

(p. 144)

Mary Lou becomes an object of sexual enjoyment. She is reduced completely to a plaything between the three male characters: "I shall give you a full and free account of my life without concealment and you can write what you like about that. But you will also give a clear account of the time you offered me Mary Lou and of the time you offered Halliday Mary Lou and had the offer accepted." (p. 152) Even syntactically, Tucker becomes the subject, the offerer, while the other three become the objects in different ways. Halliday and Wilf represent the direct object of the sentence. However, we must bear in mind that

Tucker's position here is sustained only linguistically while his "real" position in the power structure is still the same, that is to say, a weak position. The whole passage savours of male domination. Mary Lou never assumes full subjectivity even when she speaks. Her speech act is performed in response to the request of other subjects. But even Barclay himself does not assume full subjectivity in his own narrative.

Although Barclay insists on playing God in his narrative, he is shown as a failure. In this novel, we encounter a situation similar to the one in Lord of the Flies. The two narrators show their inclination towards "naturalist" description:

That tiny fragment of dirty blue stone fell a yard in front of me and I stood on my right foot, about to put the left one down but I kept it there in the air and looked at the stone. It was less than half an inch square. (p. 122)

It is obvious that the narrator, Barclay, wants at once to appear and disappear from the scene of events. As we have seen in Lord of the Flies, there are specific reasons for this desire. Barclay wants his reader to believe in his narrative. He can only achieve this goal by showing the reader that he is unprejudiced. So the naturalist description comes into play. But as we see from the description, there is no way that this passage can be described as naturalist. We have already seen Barclay confused as to which side of Tucker's nails he was

describing. In this passage, he seems to be alert even to the tiniest detail such as keeping his left foot in the air. It is not likely that Barclay has a diary in his hand to record instantly every single act in his life. Secondly, he is not narrating in the present continuous tense. It is also unlikely that Barclay has a good memory for all these exact details: "a yard in front of me", "stood on my right foot", and "less than an inch square" unless he has in mind at every moment of his life the intention that he is going to write about these things one day. It would seem that Barclay is omniscient but the question is one of reasonableness. At one stage in the narrative we are told that Barclay is lost between two states of dreaming and wakefulness, a situation which makes what he narrates a matter of doubt. By being so meticulous in his description of these objects, Barclay betrays a constant desire to emphasise his subjectivity behind the narrative. He tries to assert his subjectivity by sprawling all over the text. But since Barclay accepts his role in society, he is easily contained within it. It is important to see him criticizing Tucker for the kind of criticism he produces and even more important to see him drawing the reader's attention to Halliday's world of exploitation and sexual degeneracy, but he does not make any efforts himself to break this chain. He is drowned in a sea of degeneracy with the other characters. That is why he succeeds in proving his subjectivity at some points in

the narrative only to lose it again at the end of it. One of the dangers of this process of degeneration, however, is that Barclay's character is judged individually in isolation from society.

Barclay's inability to exercise his role as a God in his own narrative should not blind us to the fact that Golding's own emphasis on this comparison between God and the novelist has its root in his fear of the loss of subjectivity in the real world: "The novelist is God of his own interior world."<sup>13</sup> Golding's own fear of becoming limited and restricted to any particular mode of interpretation makes him declare paradoxically (since God is in some sense a fixed target) that: "... as for me, I am a moving target."<sup>14</sup>

With the increasing awareness that our world is sad and godless, there is an increasing tendency to situate the subject somewhere in this floating universe. The reason why Barclay claims that he is part of the universe is because he desires to know exactly where he belongs. In other words, there is a sense of loss in the novel. The loss is precisely that of subjectivity which is implied in the loss of a permanent meaning. Golding's own, perhaps unconscious, revenge for this loss of meaning is clearly shown by means of "reconstructing" most of his plots in a way where death is the ultimate destination. Therefore, death becomes metaphorically the "guarantor" of meaning which nobody can evade. This again can be seen in relation

to the first quotation by Walter Benjamin in the introduction.

Love, on the other hand, can be seen as an alternative. But since our society seems to be already a loveless and godless one, the only punishment for lack of love is death. Pincher Martin, Jocelin, and Barclay have to die. By manipulating his plots, Golding is able to show how society is disordered within the novels and to imply that only love will conquer this disorder. A pattern, according to Golding's analogy between God and the novelist, has to exist in what is mostly a patternless society: "In all my books I have suggested a shape in the universe that may, as it were, account for things."<sup>15</sup> But there is already an implicit contradiction in Golding's stance when he declares that always the truth is metaphorical. For if the truth is really always metaphorical, there might be no chances of arriving at it at all. If truth can be reflected metaphorically, how can we ever hope to catch it? Yet Golding himself seems to be searching for the "truth" in his fictions. Golding shows in the endings of his novels a similar tendency to what we see in the novels of Muriel Spark. Reflected in her work is a similar analogy between God and the novelist. In her article, "'Angels Dining at the Ritz': The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark", Ruth Whittaker writes:

Both God and the novelist create a world which they then people with characters simultaneously free and limited. Sometimes in novels, as in real life,

characters resent and fight back at authorial or divine omniscience, and the dynamic relationship between creator and character is integral to Mrs Spark's plots. Not surprisingly, her novels very often end with death, because, having seized on the connection between morality and the novel form, she fuses the eschatological interests of the Roman Catholic with the aesthetic teleology of the novel....'<sup>6</sup>

Many of Golding's narratives end with death. But the problem we have in The Paper Men is that we do not know exactly where Golding stands with regard to Barclay. We need to know where his sympathy lies. Does he shift his sympathy, for instance, from one page to another confusing by that himself and the reader? Or does he commit himself to one point of view? I must remind the reader here that I am not discussing the narrator's point(s) of view in Golding's fictions but rather Golding's own commitment to a certain perspective through which he clearly sees man and the universe. This is very important, I believe, since the reader's response to his fictions is mostly a response to a sense of "confusion". Golding declares that:

It is, then, a moral question.... We had better *decide* we are Lamarckian and make it work. We must produce *homo moralis*, the human being who cannot kill his own kind, nor exploit them nor rob them.'<sup>7</sup>

With this political thought in mind, we can easily notice how his characters are crippled with a heavy "burden" of responsibility, the responsibility of having to be "good people", otherwise the social system would not work. The implication of Golding's philosophy of the

nature of man is echoed not only in his fiction but also in many criticisms of his fiction.

I will show in the remainder of this chapter how some reviewers responded to The Paper Men only on the basis of "good" and "bad" characters and forgot or perhaps intentionally neglected the most important issues in the novel particularly the theme of banishment. In her review of the book entitled "All that glitters", Eva Figs writes:

The kind of narrator Golding has chosen cuts out the possibility of fine writing and this is a big sacrifice to make for such a thin return. But it also raises another problem. The story concerns the interlocking hate relationship between Barclay and his would-be biographer, an American academic called Rick Tucker, who is prepared to go to any lengths to get hold of his "material", from rifling dustbins to pimping his young wife, a temptation to which Wilf almost succumbs. Given that Barclay must be a bad writer, it seems absurd that anyone should bother to make him the object of academic study. All right, so the joke is that Rick, the third-rate academic in pursuit of a second-rate novelist, is being paid by a dotty and mysterious millionaire rather than a prestigious institution—but who cares, when all is said and done, about two such utterly worthless characters tormenting each other?'<sup>13</sup>

The first question which arises here is why does Eva Figs herself bother to discuss such a novel in the first place if she thinks that what is happening is a matter of interlocking hate-relationship between two worthless characters? But Figs is not the unforgiving type of critic. Of course she hastens to acknowledge without much ado that: "Every serious writer must be allowed to fail

occasionally and certainly every novelist should be allowed an occasional frolic, some lightweight joke of a book which neither writer nor reader need take too seriously."<sup>19</sup> I cannot think of any reason why a reader should not take a book seriously even if it is thought to be an "occasional frolic". But it is obvious that Eva Figes is wrong in her assessment of the novel. There is a clear misunderstanding of the position of the narrator. There is even no mention of any levels of narration or whether there are any metafictional devices at work in the novel. She only asserts the givenness of Barclay's badness as a writer. In his structural reading of the novel, Philip Redpath rightly observes that:

Most reviewers missed the point of The Paper Men. Golding the novelist was identified with Barclay his fictional novelist. Derwent May believed that Golding had created "a kind of direct portrait of himself".... John Bayley criticised Golding for committing the "primal sin" of breaking the "formal but also more sociable relation of the novelist to his reader".... But there is no reason why Golding should be identified with Barclay....<sup>20</sup>

It is clear how some critics are caught up uncritically in the web of individualism which is enhanced in the novel one way or another. My argument is that it is not necessary to have a completely social background for a novel (although we have much of that in The Paper Men) to be labelled as a social novel. Sometimes the form which a novel assumes is itself an expression of a social crisis wherein individual "heroes" seem in their alienated status

to be the only focus of literary writing. Is Ulysses only about one character?

John Bayley takes the matter further than anybody can expect or accept in his review of the The Paper Men. He inaugurates his one page review of this novel with a decision which is made with all the strength of mind and heart about "the stigma of autobiography". He starts by saying that:

The narrator in a novel can let the reader know that he is not the novelist but only a close relation: perhaps another novelist. There are many possibilities where the purpose is to enlarge the bounds of the self while avoiding the stigma of autobiography. Henry James observed that the novelist is present on every page from which he seeks so assiduously to remove himself, and sometimes the best way to do it may be not to try too hard. Conrad, Proust, Charlotte Bronte, Anthony Powell, are among those who have successfully manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, these modes of equivocation.<sup>21</sup>

From these words, the reader expects to find a certain parallel between Wilfred Barclay and the real creator. But no such parallel exists in Bayley's review entitled "Complacency and Abasement". Instead, Bayley proceeds to tell the story of the book mobilizing in the meantime his personal hatred and disgust against Wilfred Barclay:

The narrator of The Paper Men is a novelist called Wilf Barclay, a compulsive tapper on the typewriter in times of stress, a compulsive recorder of his own sensations. They interest him more than they do the reader, but the reader is made to feel that this impression is being created by the real novelist, William Golding, in order to show how nasty and narcissistic, how full of self-hatred and compulsive guilt, a great talent in the business can be.<sup>22</sup>

Is it really true that a truly great talent in the business can be "nasty, narcissistic, full of self-hatred and compulsive guilt"? But even if we concede this point, is it not more significant to consider the split between the "moral" aspect and the "professional" one? Bayley allows himself the assumption that Barclay's own sensations interest the latter more than they do the reader (every reader!). It is obvious enough that Bayley's criticism is based on a direct rejection of the "bad" epithets of the fictional character, Wilfred Townsend Barclay. If Barclay is bad, then let him be destroyed so that the social relations which might be the real cause behind the production of such a character might vanish forever.

Although Redpath is probably the only critic who pinpointed the social themes fairly correctly, he is still in danger of forcing the historical aspect of these themes into a universal dichotomy of "day-to-day being" and its deeper "isness" falling victim, therefore, to Barclay's own philosophy of language as we shall see in a moment. In his article mentioned above, he draws heavily on the two voices of the stream of falling water. He emphasises that the deeper voice of the stream is "the voice of the sub-plot" while "the surface voice is the 'frivolity' of ordinary life and belongs to the plot."<sup>23</sup> Later on he states that: "Through the sub-plot of The Paper Men

Golding makes us aware of man's metaphysical existence beneath the babble of daily living."<sup>24</sup> But it is not enough that Redpath reaches such a conclusion since it is precisely "the babble of daily living" that Golding wants to expose in an attempt to destroy that same duality in our experience of the real world. Golding's endeavour is not merely to establish the fact that there are a "babble of daily living" and a "metaphysical existence" but rather to fight this babble off in an attempt to establish one deeper reality, the "reality" of the "metaphysical" existence.

Redpath contradicts himself when he writes: "Certainly criticism changes the work of art by altering the perspectives from which we view it,"<sup>25</sup> and in the same breath says: "Most reviewers missed the point of The Paper Men." The matter might have been different if he had said "serious" criticism, but even then, some might argue: where do we draw the line between serious and not-serious criticism? However, we shall see in the conclusion that Golding is in favour of no criticism at all.

I would suggest that The Paper Men is perhaps Golding's only narrative which urges us very clearly to look at literature not from without but from within, as it were. It does not matter after all whether Barclay and Tucker are "utterly worthless characters" or not. But it certainly matters much if we think that they represent only a freak in our society. If Golding cannot reach a

solution to some social problems, it is precisely because he cannot penetrate into the heart of the subtle contradictions which those problems embed and which he explores so vividly. Barclay should not be dismissed out of hand. He is a conscious character who knows a lot about emptiness. That is why he is at once frightened of going home and remaining away from home. To brand him as an empty character would take us only half way towards the truth. And the truth of the matter is that as long as we take the individualist rather than the "social" radical approach towards understanding these contradictions, we will remain prisoners of a destructive ideology. In a way, adopting the social approach implies the politicisation of the problem. As for The Paper Men itself, it is an attempt to understand the contradictions of the twentieth-century society. The fact that many readers fail to understand some of these contradictions can be explained from Barclay's own understanding of language as a matter of metaphors and from an isness that will always elude him:

Mostly I brooded on the isness. Why this harping on isness? you'll ask. Are you up the wall? you'll say. Isn't quote reality unquote good enough for you? Well the answer lies in the genius of the language. This wasn't reality which is a philosophical concept but quote isness unquote a word from the seamy side of speech for the involuntary act of awareness. I've invented it myself because the dream didn't happen to a philosopher but to me. Religious, scientific, psychiatric, philosophical, all straight up the spout!  
*Eh voilà! Non, voici.* (p. 163)

## NOTES

1. Walter Benjamin, One-Way Street and Other Writings, trans. Edmund Jephcott and Kingsley Shorter (London: NLB, 1979), p. 59.
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3. William Golding, A Moving Target (1982; rpt. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 156.
4. Ibid., p. 168.
5. Philip Redpath, "What the Water Said: Plot, Sub-plot and Criticism in The Paper Men," Critical Quarterly, 26, No. 4 (Winter 1984), 68-69.
6. See Eva Figes, "All that glitters," a review of The Paper Men in New Statesman (10 February 1984), 23.
7. William Golding, The Hot Gates (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 85.
8. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 168.
9. David Punter, "Shelley: Poetry and Politics," in David Aers, Jonathan Cook and David Punter, Romanticism & Ideology: Studies in English Writing 1765-1830 (London, Boston and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981), p. 166.
10. David Punter, The Hidden Script: Writing and the Unconscious (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1985), p. 3.
11. Ibid., p. 2.
12. See Malcolm Bradbury's blurb on the back cover of The Paper Men (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1984)
13. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 100.
14. Ibid., p. 170.
15. Quoted by Cecil W. Davies, "The Novels Foreshadowed: Some Recurring Themes in Early Poems by William Golding," English, 17 (1968), 87.
16. Ruth Whittaker, "'Angels Dining at the Ritz': The Faith and Fiction of Muriel Spark," in The Contemporary English Novel, ed. Malcolm Bradbury and David Palmer (London: Edward Arnold, 1979), p. 162.

17. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 184.

18. Figes, 23.

19. Ibid., 23.

20. Redpath, 67.

21. John Bayley, "Complacence and Abasement," review of The Paper Men, Guardian, 9 February 1984, 22.

22. Ibid., 22.

23. Redpath, 68.

24. Ibid., 78.

25. Ibid., 75.

## Chapter Seven

### The Trilogy: Desexualized Sexuality

The writer's problem is, how to strike the balance between the uncommon and the ordinary so as on the one hand to give interest, on the other to give reality.

In working out the problem, human nature must never be made abnormal, which is introducing incredibility. The uncommonness must be in the events, not in the characters....' (Thomas Hardy)

Golding's trilogy, Rites of Passage(1980), Close Quarters(1987), and Fire Down Below(1989), represents in a way the culmination of the Golding character portrayal as well as the brilliance of his narrative exposition. The protagonist of the trilogy is the young Edmund Talbot who sets out with the utmost confidence towards a distinguished career. An ancient ship of the line converted to general purposes is making her way from the South of England to Australia. She carries a few guns, some cargo, some animals, some seamen, some soldiers, some emigrants and a few ladies and gentlemen. But one character in particular with a significant role to play is the Reverend Robert Colley whose story is reconstructed from a real-life story of a man who willed himself to death after being publicly humiliated. The real event occurred in the early years of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, Colley, the fictional character, dies in the first part of the trilogy while the echo of his voice reverberates significantly in Talbot's dreams in the

second and third parts. Rites of Passage won Golding the Booker Prize in 1980.

After Colley's death there is still a long way to go. The elderly man of war is laden with an assortment of men and women whose forced proximity has intensified their jealousies, lusts, friendships, loves and hatreds almost to explosion point. In Close Quarters, the ship meets another, Alcyone, and Talbot is introduced to Marion Chumley, an "event" which changes his understanding of social relations. In this second part of the trilogy there is a separation between Talbot and Marion who are reunited in Fire Down Below. We shall see later how this separation is significant in maintaining or rather producing the narrative to its end. The concluding part ends on a happy note. However, Golding still encounters a problem with regard to the main character in the trilogy.

The difficulty which Golding faces is not how to sustain the narrative to the end, but rather how to deal once again with a protagonist who seems at once to incorporate some of Golding's own convictions about life and art and who seems to contradict flagrantly all those convictions in his behaviour towards the other characters. This creates, as we shall see at the end of this chapter, a dilemma for Golding since his own commitment to social justice (which he presumably thinks can be borne out by Talbot) is almost totally undermined by his protagonist. Faced with the many contradictions that I will be

discussing here, Talbot is possessed with a rage that varies with the different intensities of those contradictions.

The second problem which we will encounter with regard to these contradictions is the "uncommonness" they help to reveal in Talbot's character. However, we should not take Hardy's above recommendation for granted. The question which is likely to present itself to us is: What if the character itself is really uncommon? In other words, how can the novelist avoid creating the impression that he is locating the uncommonness in the character if the character is already uncommon or self-contradictory?

I shall attempt in this chapter to concentrate as thoroughly as possible on the character of Edmund Talbot in a further attempt to show that it still is the typical Golding character notwithstanding the change in his method of characterisation. By contrasting Talbot's viewpoint with Colley's, the former's character is portrayed more clearly and its intentions are focused more sharply. Although this kind of contrasting two viewpoints is not clearly laid out in Golding's earlier fiction, Virginia Tiger discerns a similar particular structure of the narrative movements which she calls "the ideographic structure" in the first five novels:

I call this structure an ideographic structure so as to suggest specifically the following features: first, the ideographic structure consists in two narrative movements, the second of which is a coda.... Secondly, the ideographic structure involves two different

perspectives on the same situation: that emerging from the first movement and that emerging from the coda. In the first narrative movement events are seen from one character's point of view while in the coda events are seen either from another character's point of view or ... from the enlightened consciousness of the novel's protagonist.<sup>2</sup>

Tiger's observation, however, makes Golding's endeavour to carry out what she calls the ideographic structure in the first five novels sound more systematic than it really is. It is only in the trilogy and particularly in Rites of Passage that we see this structure clearly outlined. We see it carried out in Colley's "significant" letter which covers sixty one pages of the narrative and in which the attitude, whether it is Talbot's or the reader's towards Colley and his vision, changes. In this chapter, I shall attempt to deal with various themes that might be, if the reader wishes to group them together, subsumable under the comprehensive title of human relationships. But taken separately, and for the sake of clarification, these themes will cover possessiveness, envy, the concept of "exchange", the flogging motif, the subject of sexuality with the related problem of the body, the significance of poetry as the language of the future and finally the importance of an alternative vision. But the underlying theme is the relevance of rage to all the previous themes. In a word, we shall see Golding's own dissatisfaction with the status of our materialistic society expressed through his character's rage.

The main contradiction in the trilogy revolves around the theme of sexuality. The two female characters around whom this contradiction revolves are Miss Zenobia and Marion Chumley. The best description of the contradiction embedded in the trilogy is given by Talbot himself: "In a sentence, having gained the favours of *Venus* I did not wish to inflict the pains of *Lucina*!" (ROP, p. 86) *Venus* is the Roman goddess of love and *Lucina* is a name given to Juno as goddess of childbirth. Zenobia is chased only for her sexual favours while Marion Chumley is desired for bearing Talbot's children. In other words, There is an oscillation between the woman-mistress and the woman-wife. Talbot who begins the trilogy in Rites of Passage gaining the sexual favours of Zenobia while avoiding the infliction of the pains of *Lucina* on her ends up on the last page of Fire Down Below with a great-great-great-great-great-grandmother, Marion Chumley. There is, of course, a process of transformation in terms of maturity, but this process involves, as we shall see in a moment, only the "emotional" side of the character. In other words, what is reflected through this transformation is the other transformation of the woman who is sexually uninhibited to the woman who sustains the "traditional" position of a good mother and a good wife. The active power of the woman is no longer sexual but rather salvific.<sup>24</sup> Talbot who enjoys a few weeks of freedom from the whole paraphernalia of Established Religion in Rites

of Passage celebrates his marriage under the canopy of that same religion. In the course of my analysis, I will discuss the many contradictory statements of the protagonist. In general, however, Edmund Talbot is portrayed as a character full of rage. But since the events of the trilogy are supposed to have happened in the early nineteenth century, it would be important to see how the romantic spirit reflects itself in the behaviour of the protagonist.

The instances where Edmund Talbot feels outraged by other characters are many in the trilogy. But this rage is doubly significant. The events of the trilogy are supposed to have happened around 1813. We must bear in mind that the trilogy is a Faction, namely, "a work that is on the borderline between fact and fiction, concerned primarily with a real event or persons, but using imagined detail to increase readability and verisimilitude."<sup>4</sup> Bearing this in mind, the double significance of the characteristic of rage becomes clear in the sense that not only is Rage characteristic of the historical Romantic period but also extends to our own times in perhaps different masks but certainly for the "same" reasons. Talbot represents the aristocracy of his time, and we are told that "[T]his voyage will be the making of you, Mr Talbot. At moments I even detect a strong streak of humanity in you as if you was a common fellow like the rest of us!" (CQ, p. 178) These words uttered by Charles Summers are imbued with

sarcasm since the hint that Charles even detects a strong streak of humanity in Talbot implies very strongly the lack of it. It is precisely at this point that we begin to see the contradictions. How is it possible for Talbot at once to lack humanity and feel outraged (for "humane" reasons) at some of the stultifying conditions in the ship or on land? Talbot already realizes that Benet and Charles might be mocking at him: "Well, gentlemen, I see you are determined to roast me." (CQ, p. 178)

It would be useful for us before I pursue the analysis any further if I point out a general misunderstanding of Golding's endeavours and intentions in his novels. It is typical of most critics who take Golding's novels as their object of analysis to brand his themes as metaphysical. Norman Page, for example, asserts that "Golding's concern is with larger, more fundamental and abstract issues that may be called metaphysical or theological."<sup>45</sup> Ian Milligan raises the same point in his book The English Novel although he does not give a lengthy argument. Golding is discussed in two sentences only. It is worth, therefore, to quote them in full since they are brief and they illustrate the point I will make about metaphysicality:

The novels of William Golding (b. 1911), Lord of the Flies (1954), The Spire (1964), Rites of Passage (1981), often draw on the material of exploit or adventure but their themes are metaphysical. Boys' adventures on a deserted island, the building of a cathedral spire, an eighteenth-century voyage to Australia form the mould into which are poured speculations about the incorrigible corruptibility of the human will.<sup>46</sup>

The first thing that strikes us as odd is the two oversights in the two sentences, the first being the publication date of Rites of Passage while the second concerns the events of this novel which do not occur in the eighteenth century but in the nineteenth. However, these oversights are not serious compared to the misleading content of the statement. The serious question to be asked is how much insight do Page's assertion and Milligan's sentences give the reader? I am not against generalisations in principle but rather against the way in which they might lead the reader into agreeing that Golding's fiction is really difficult for precisely its metaphysicality and that his themes are somewhat intractable. Instead of seeing the novel, with whatever shape it is produced, as a reaction to or "reflection" of the historical period in which the fiction is produced, we are taken into an area where no argument is going to prove useful simply because of the "incorrigible corruptibility of the human will" and the abstractness of these metaphysical issues. There is obviously no point in discussing the corruptibility of the human will if it proves to be incorrigible. Virginia Tiger discusses Golding's themes not in terms of men's relations to their societies but rather in terms of what is permanent in man's nature:

The fiction\_\_unlike most contemporary novels\_\_is preoccupied with what is permanent in man's nature, looking not at men simply in relation to a particular society but at man in relation to his cosmic situation: his evil in Lord of the Flies, his origins in The Inheritors, his destiny in Pincher Martin, his guilt in Free Fall, his vision in The Spire, his heart's meanness in The Pyramid, and his heady inventiveness in The Scorpion God.<sup>7</sup>

One is immediately likely to wonder about the meaning of "simply" and whether there is more than that "particular society" that can generate our anger and rage in the first place. There is no mention in Tiger's statement, as there certainly is in Golding's fictions, of any historical period whatsoever such as the "pre-historic" period of The Inheritors, the thirteenth century of the actual building of the spire in The Spire, the Second World War in Pincher Martin, the expected pessimistic future of Lord of the Flies, or the period between the two World Wars in The Pyramid. William Golding is goaded into action, namely, the writing of his fiction, not by a general evil but by a sense of historical evil made particularly possible through the class struggle. The Neanderthal Man is pushed away by the *Homo Sapiens*; the church is despised in the eyes of the positivists; the "Nazi" agglomeration of Jack's group is against the democratic tendency of the other group; the disintegrated capitalist society has its concomitant aggrandised selfhood in Pincher Martin and finally the working class drags its sorrows behind it in The Pyramid. After all

these historical locations, it would be difficult to maintain that man's evil is metaphysical. It is true that Golding is preoccupied with evil in all these historical periods, but we must not forget that this evil is created precisely through the human agency of the ruling class rather than divine will or a metaphysically incorrigible will.

Being the last work that Golding embarked upon, the trilogy flaunts its contradictions in a "sophisticated" way. We shall see later on that the contradiction which I mentioned earlier can be seen as a contradiction between a coveted stable social order and a language which is "poetic" but which also destroys iconoclastically any hope of preserving a cherished stable order. We will see how this contradiction haunts the protagonist who is torn between an obsession to be the perfect poet and a desire to keep the traditional heritage of nobility (the structure of power and domination) intact. This tension is nowhere better expressed than in Golding's own confession: "I have always been a curious mixture of conservative and anarchist. Translated into an attitude towards verse-making, this means either being content with a minimal result or destroying the thing petulantly."<sup>10</sup> With this confession, it is easy to recognize the "problem" as a problem of contradiction rather than metaphysicality.

We cannot discuss evil in metaphysical and absolute terminology because it does not exist metaphysically and

absolutely. The difficulty of dealing with metaphysical themes is expressed brilliantly in the following quotation quoted in Elizabeth Wright's Psychoanalytic Criticism: Theory in Practice:

There was once a red-haired man who had no eyes and no ears. He also had no hair, so he was called red-haired only in a manner of speaking.

He wasn't able to talk, because he didn't have a mouth. He had no nose, either.

He didn't have any arms or legs. He also didn't have a stomach, and he didn't have a back, and he didn't have a spine, and he also didn't have any other insides. He didn't have anything. So it's hard to understand whom we are talking about.

So we'd better not talk about him any more.\*

(Daniil Kharms 1974)

Virginia Tiger, however, paradoxically juxtaposes her previous statement quoted above with the following statement where the difference is quite clear between the ancient and the contemporary man:

In the fiction, Golding consciously tries to construct a religious mythopoeia relevant to contemporary man since he agrees generally with the anthropological notion that it is through myth that the imaginative substance of religious belief is expressed, communicated, and enhanced.... In Golding's view, contemporary man lacks vision.<sup>10</sup>

We can easily detect the difference in tone between the first statement and the second one. In the second statement, Tiger recognizes that there were eras in history when man had vision whereas contemporary man is proving to have none. She continues by saying: "At one pole in Golding's aesthetic continuum allegory exists, and

at the other pole, myth."'' Tiger probably means the kind of difference which exists between Lord of the Flies on the one hand and The Inheritors on the other. She develops her argument more significantly in the notes to her introduction when she compares between Golding and Blake. She writes:

Another Romantic poet's conception of this analytic/synthetic continuum seems entirely relevant here: William Blake writes: "the last Judgment is not Fable or Allegory but Vision. Fable or Allegory are a totally distinct and inferior kind of Poetry. Vision or Imagination is a Representation of what Eternally exists, Really and Unchangeably. Fable or Allegory is Form'd by the Daughters of Memory. Imagination is surrounded by the daughters of Inspiration, who in the aggregate are call'd Jerusalem. Fable is Allegory, but what Critics call The Fable, is Vision itself. The Hebrew Bible & the Gospel of Jesus are not Allegory, but Eternal Vision or Imagination of All that Exists. Note here that Fable or Allegory is seldom without some Vision."<sup>12</sup>

From this quotation we notice the difference between Blake's concept of the "eternal" and Tiger's concept of what is "permanent" in man's nature. What is permanent according to Tiger's point of view is the aspect of evil as she makes clear from the evil, the guilt, the meanness in three of the novels. What Tiger does not realize is that Golding understands these supposedly eternal evils historically although he does not, because of his simplistic political point of view, make this issue very clear. Blake, in contrast with Tiger's conception of the permanent, thinks of Vision itself or Imagination as a representation of what eternally exists. I will extend

this comparison between Blake and Golding to Rites of Passage and show that it might as well be a contrast rather than a comparison. We can see that Blake and Golding are both visionaries, but let us take an example of how their visions work through their images of industrialisation in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Blake writes in The Four Zoas:

And all the time in Caverns shut, the golden Looms  
erected  
First spun, then wove the Atmospheres, there the  
Spider & Worm  
Piled the winged shuttle piping shrill thro' all the  
list'ning threads  
Beneath the Caverns roll the weights of lead &  
spindles of iron,  
The enormous warp & woof rage direful in the  
affrighted deep.<sup>13</sup>

In these lines we can see what David Punter calls:

... an absolute disjunction between the work of the spider and worm, carried on underground and hidden from sight, and the visible rearing of the Mundane Shell; the squalor and cruelty of the labour itself has no place in the beauty of the thing created. When Los and Enitharmon walk amid this shimmering grandeur, they see nothing of the slavery which has gone into it, nothing of the blood which has been spilt, only the glory of the finished product, cleansed of its connexions with the realm of work.<sup>14</sup>

A passage from the second book in Golding's trilogy, Close Quarters, will show us the contrast between Blake's industrial image and that of Golding. Golding uses the same two metals, lead and iron, in his image:

A full shot garland such as the one I had crouched by  
on the gundeck seemed emblems of all the millions of  
tons of old iron lying about in corners of the

civilized world\_\_now never to be used, rusting cannon which would do for rubbing posts, muskets and musket balls sold as curios, swords, my famous cutlass\_\_ there seemed in my head no end to iron and lead. Then the ships newly built but now never to be launched!

(CQ, p. 54)

This passage is both important and typical of the way in which the desired effect that the reader is supposed to get wears away at the end of it. It is precisely Golding's sense or love of the poetical which is responsible for diverting the reader from the content of the passage. Let us take as an example the line "there seemed in my head no end to iron and lead." This line can easily be halved into two as follows:

There seemed in my head  
No end to iron and lead.

We can see how the end-rhyme in "seemed", "head", "end", and "lead" has a lulling effect on our ears. Although Blake uses a similar device, the head-rhyme, in the final line quoted above, he still expresses in three words, "rage", "direful", "affrighted", his disgust with the "system". Moreover, Blake expresses his threat in the word "rage". Golding's industrial image expresses by contrast only the sorrow and waste which will befall the generations to come. It is but a general feeling of pity over the wasted material without showing us the work that goes into the making of the ships that are now never to be launched. But what is more important than that is the

"precise" feeling which Edmund Talbot generates in the hearts of his readers. It is clear that Talbot's pity cannot be taken seriously, a pity which comes from a character which is finally dragged to visit another character, Colley, and which insists on the title "sir". The rage which Talbot feels is, by his own admission, a weak kind of rage and understandably so. Talbot's rage is a matter of sentimentalisation. To have a fuller understanding of the contrast between Blake and Golding, we have to look at the way in which they express their rages. We notice that Blake tends to particularise the problem. There are three layers of rage, as it were, each of which seems to intensify this rage. There are the caverns, beneath the caverns, and finally the affrighted deep. Golding's rage as "communicated" in the passage is diluted rather than concentrated. We have the millions of tons of old iron lying about in corners of the civilized world. However, the ultimate distinction between Blake and Golding is to be sought in their respective understanding of politics. To put it briefly, Blake politicises the aesthetical while Golding blatantly aestheticises the political. Paradoxically, the more Golding widens his scope of concern for humanity, the less that concern seems to be helpful.

The crux of the matter seems to be Golding's own understanding of aesthetics. Golding, I believe, seems to admire what some might call the "aristocratic" tendency to

appreciate art for its own sake. This he shows through his admiration of even single words if they prove to have a strange ring to his ears. Golding is renowned for his admiration for Greek words which he thinks can express things that the English vocabulary cannot express. However, the tension between the desire to appreciate art for its own sake and the need to convey a social message is reflected in almost all his books. Before I show the reflection of this oscillation in Talbot's own character, I shall quote Golding about the historical location of the trilogy. The following is a conversation between Golding and James R Baker:

BAKER: So Rites of Passage is by no means a historical novel, purely and simply; it has relevance to the contemporary situation?

GOLDING: It's a black comedy with relevance to the present situation.

BAKER: The ship therefore is really Britannia or Britain in little?

GOLDING: I suppose Britain is nearer home, so to speak, than anywhere else, but I don't think the book is aimed at Britain to the exclusion of any other country which suffers from class systems, like, say, India. Or like New England, for example, that I found far more like Old England than I could have believed.

BAKER: Looking at it again as an historical novel\_\_ why this particular period? We are looking at events that occur sometimes between 1805 and 1814?

GOLDING: I would put it round about 1812 or 1813. First, because the original, the historical incident round which I've built the story happened at that time; secondly, I happened to have a great deal of source material in my head, I didn't have to bother to do any research or anything like that. And, you see, I know sailors, I know the Royal Navy.

BAKER: In a certain sense it would be accurate to call it an historical novel, and perhaps your first historical novel?

GOLDING: Yes, all right.'\*

(my emphasis)

Although the narrative is not produced in the early years of the nineteenth century, I believe that we can still discern the Romantic unconscious at work. Talbot's "unconscious" will be allotted an important place in the following analysis. Don Crompton observes that: "Anachronisms occasionally creep in. The words "loo" (a privy) and "sky pilot" (nautical slang for a clergyman) both belong to the late, rather than the early, nineteenth century."<sup>16</sup> Later on he says that: "Rites of Passage feels like a genuine story of its time and that is enough."<sup>17</sup> Let me clarify what it is exactly that I want to do here. It is of course impossible to recapture exactly the Romantic spirit of the early nineteenth century unless we are thrust back in history by a fantastic device to live the historical events as they were taking place at the time. Even then, it is doubtful whether we shall get the picture completely right since this would imply, if we were to achieve that, that we can have an absolute understanding of the spirit of our own times. However, this is not to suggest in any way whatsoever that certain tendencies and structures of thought and feelings cannot be grasped fairly correctly. This would be enough for an understanding of the ideology of the time particularly if we look at the literature of the Romantic period. It is possible that Golding can, by a combination of imagination and source material, recapture something of that early

nineteenth-century Romantic spirit. Golding declares that: "I happened to have a great deal of source material in my head." But what is more important than that is that we will be able to witness a marriage, so to speak, of two "separate" cultural periods. If it is clear at the end of the day that we still have that Romantic spirit in a different shape, we will be able to say that Romanticism has not really deserted us completely. In his book, The Romantic Unconscious, David Punter ponders over this matter: "And so I would like to try to see romanticism as both before our eyes and behind our averted gaze."<sup>16</sup>

My main aim behind this exposition is to show the split which took place between "culture" and "civilization" in the early nineteenth century. We can do no better than to listen attentively to John Fekete describing this kind of duality:

The decisive feature of the romantic period (in regard to this enquiry) was that historical reality was producing itself in the determinate form of a duality between "culture" and "civilization." During the period of modern critical theory, this bifurcation is being resolved by the reunification of "culture" and "civilization" under the extended categories of neocapitalist production relations. In relation to the dominant social forms, the structural reality at the heart of romanticism was tension, negation; at the heart of modern critical theory, it is identification, affirmation. It has taken more than a hundred years to stabilize and integrate this cultural opposition, and it is valuable to record it at its source.<sup>17</sup>

What happens in the trilogy is a brilliant exposition of these two tendencies. Since Golding is a twentieth-

century writer writing in the trilogy about the early nineteenth-century Romantic period, it is easy to notice what Fekete describes in the making. Golding is unconsciously trying to come to terms with this tension. In the character of Talbot, we can see both the bifurcation and the reunification at work to a degree where Talbot is capable of generating a new kind of romanticism. This new kind of romanticism is self-contradictory and it is best described as a calculating romanticism. Talbot is a romantic character in his attempt to "become" a poet using a language that cannot be "restrained" by the dreadful prospect of degeneration of human values. The romantic language can be seen as a necessary reaction against the rising tide of capitalist deterioration. On the other hand, Talbot is part of that degeneration by belonging to the ruling class. The more he tries to be romantic, the more he finds himself up against his own system. It is this contradiction which lies behind his tendency to calculate rather than revolt spontaneously against the system. This contradiction is neatly summarized in the polarization between Talbot the poet and his honoured godfather, the representative of the ruling class. What we will ultimately get is a discourse of contradiction written out on the pages of the trilogy. No wonder then that we see the features of spontaneity and calculability appositely juxtaposed in Talbot's character. It is in Talbot's "unconscious" that we will watch this

opposition dramatized. However, it is possible that Talbot's background, the nobility, is responsible for him being what one would call a "liberal humanist". We will notice that this liberal humanism is behind the weak rather than strong kind of rage.

Golding's burning desire to know what man is encourages him to penetrate into the depths of his characters with what seems to be his special *bricolage*. Edmund Talbot is, with all the evidence to the contrary, an aggressive character. We shall see that this aggressiveness is coated with a cover of gentility and with a gesture towards an aristocratic behaviour. I will emphasize that I am not taking an essentialist approach and conjuring up something which does not exist in the text itself. It is clear from the text that Talbot is capable of aggressiveness:

I lost my temper and went blind. I say that advisedly. Then I saw, but it was red. I saw red. It was literally red. My mouth opened and I shouted at him [Mr Pike]. I heaped on him every contumely, every insult my tongue could find, and when I had done I could not remember what I had said.... Far from feeling that I should apologize for my burst of rage I felt it was entirely justified. (FDB, p. 162)

The reader should not forget that Talbot is capable of exhibiting exactly the other extreme, that which culminates in tears and sensibility. However, it is this other extreme which helps cover and excuse the fits of rage which he goes through. What is exhibited of Talbot's character to the other characters is often a gentlemanly

deportment and a courageous soul. But let us first witness another encounter, this time between Talbot and Benet:

This was the beginning of it all. The period is one of which I am still ashamed and shall always be so, I think. Rage fed on rage. It was Mrs Prettiman's fault, of course\_\_but he, Benet, with his plain theft of my idea for helping the little girls\_\_she had taken from him, accepted from him what she would not accept from me....

"Where did you steal that idea?"

"I do not steal ideas!"

"I am not convinced of that."

"Your convictions are irrelevant."

"The little girls were in peril. We are all in peril, you fool!"

...

"Listen, Benet!"

It was at this point that as far as I was concerned the whole conversation became incoherent.... Briefly then, Benet and I had more words outside the door. I taxed him plainly with stealing my idea for the treatment of Pike's little girls\_\_hammocks, a la Nelson.... Talking and doing at the same time, quarrelling and thrusting, we entered the cabin....

(emphasis is mine, FDB, pp. 143, 44, 45, 46)

We can detect from this encounter Talbot's injured pride at having forfeited the praise for the ingenious idea. Not that Talbot is wrong to be outraged, but what is more significant in this scene is what lies behind this outrage. It is precisely because Mrs Prettiman accepts from Benet what she does not accept from Talbot that the latter is outraged. Talbot emphasises earlier that Mrs Prettiman and Mr Prettiman are not suitable for each other. What we see in the above scene is a crisis of recognition, and the rage which feeds on itself surfaces up because of this lack of recognition. This leads us of course to understand the related issue of self-esteem and

the romantic narcissism which will ensue from being recognized as the character which thought of the idea first. Ultimately, it is a narcissistic wound that afflicts Talbot. Moreover, Talbot is torn, as we shall see later, between his desire to be recognized as an individual and the necessity to be recognized precisely within the community of passengers. This position is explained very clearly in David Punter's book, The Romantic Unconscious: A Study in Narcissism and Patriarchy:

And echo and Narcissus thus become a principal theme of romanticism, a myth of soaring individuality and a myth of inseparability from a punitive background bound back to back, isolation constantly reminded of the lure of the crowd, companionability troubled by the pride of selfhood.<sup>20</sup>

In the following passage from Fire Down Below, we will be able to see the two "myths" interacting with each other:

I told myself that other occasions would occur in which we might renew the conversation, continue what felt like the rising curve of our intimacy. I wished with a spontaneous passion not unlike his [Mr Prettiman's] that I might be their friend. Yet I saw already that the price was impossibly high. I am after all a political animal with my spark, my\_\_if I may descend to the language fit for sergeants\_\_ my *scintillans Dei*, well hidden. I suppose the excuse to be presented to the Absolute is that I did and so sincerely wish to exercise power for the betterment of my country: which of course, and fortunately in the case of England, is for the benefit of the world in general. Let that never be forgotten.

(FDB, pp. 220-221)

For the moment, I will leave the "truth" of Talbot's claim aside, the claim that he wishes to exercise power for the betterment of his country and ultimately of the world. Being the last work that Golding embarked upon, one can see many continuities and discontinuities with earlier works. We have seen how Mountjoy declares in Free Fall that there is no spirit, no absolute. In this work, Talbot speaks of an absolute with a capital "A". But we have also seen that Golding's preoccupations are with larger themes and larger places in his fiction. Talbot wants to better the world in general through the betterment of his own country, England. It is only through such passages that one can claim that Golding's characters are pitted against the world in general rather than a specific society. In his conversation with James R Baker held in 1981, Golding stressed the fact that the book, Rites of Passage, is not aimed at Britain to the exclusion of other countries which suffer from class system. This would include almost all countries in the world. One can hardly find a country in the world without class system in one shape or another. Even if one manages to find a few countries which do not have class system, we can still safely claim that Golding's characters are pitted against the wrongs of not only one society but rather the whole humanity. Golding insists on knowing what man is rather than on knowing what the Englishman is like. It is this generality which enables us to speak of the whole humanity rather than one

particular society in Golding's fiction. Two huge continents are already connected through the symbolic journey from England to the Antipodes. However, in the above passage, what is dramatized is a specific, historical conflict between "the soaring individuality" (a political animal with my spark) and "the inseparability from a punitive background" (a spontaneous passion ... that I might be their friend." This mirrors exactly the historical situation which Marx so sharply outlines in his comments on the individual during the eighteenth century. In his Grundrisse, Marx writes:

The farther back we go into history, the more the individual and, therefore, the producing individual seems to depend on and belong to a larger whole: at first it is, quite naturally, the family and the clan, which is but an enlarged family; later on, it is the community growing up in its different forms out of the clash and the amalgamation of clans. It is only in the eighteenth century, in "civil society", that the different forms of social union confront the individual as a mere means to his private ends, as an external necessity. But the period in which this standpoint—that of the isolated individual—became prevalent is the very one in which the social relations of society (universal relations according to that standpoint) have reached the highest state of development. Man is in the most literal sense of the word a *zoon politikon*, not only a social animal, but an animal which can develop into an individual only in society. Production by isolated individuals outside society—something which might happen as an exception to a civilized man who by accident got into the wilderness and already potentially possessed within himself the forces of society—is as great an absurdity as the idea of the development of language without individuals living together and talking to one another.<sup>221</sup>

Juxtaposing these two quotations, Marx's statement about the historical process of change and Talbot's fictional discourse, in this manner, one cannot help thinking that Golding must have read Grundrisse or that otherwise Golding's thought is surprisingly akin to that of Marx. I say "surprisingly" because it was Golding himself who wrote: "I could ... account for the fact that Marxism always got the future wrong and excelled in predicting the past."<sup>22</sup> Golding is certainly mistaken in his belief that "marxism always got the future wrong" since it was Marx again who predicted more than a century ago what Golding came to describe as the age of the fragment: "For we are in the age of the fragment and wreckage, those timbers, it may be, washed up on some wild seashore."<sup>23</sup> The second point is that the "future" is not yet over for us to be able to say that Marxism always predicts wrongly. Golding's view is naturally from the present, that is, the twentieth century, although the events of the trilogy "occur" in the beginning of the nineteenth century. We notice a great similarity between Talbot's "political claim" and Marx's *zoon politikon*. Moreover, it is the need to belong to society, a need which Marx recognizes as a necessity before production is possible, which afflicts Talbot and makes his conflict a "tangible" fact. For what is Talbot's "betterment of my country" if not a kind of production whether on the political or material level? Talbot's social position as

an aristocrat puts him paradoxically in a dilemma. We notice from the start Talbot's attempt at moderation and compromise:

"my good man," said I, "what is this stink?"

He stuck his sharp nose up and peered round as if he might see the stink in the darkness rather than nose it.

"Stink, Sir? What stink, Sir?"

"*The stink*," said I, my hand over my nose and mouth as I gagged, "the feter, the stench, call it what you will!"

...

"Lord, sir!" said he. "You'll soon get used to that!"

"I do not wish to get used to it! Where is the captain of this vessel?" (ROP, pp. 4-5)

Only one page later, we see Talbot reconciled to the stench: "Already the act of breathing has moderated my awareness of our stench and the generous glass of brandy that Wheeler brought has gone near to reconciling me to it." (p. 6) Talbot's description of himself as a political animal can be literally applied to his actions. His sharp psychological insights are an indication of his sound "political" thinking. We know that he is "going to assist the governor in the administration of one His Majesty's colonies"! (p. 4) This is declared on the second page of Rites of Passage. It is because of this early indication that Talbot knows what he is going to do later on (in the political field of government) which justifies my belief that he is already mature politically rather than "emotionally" as I have mentioned earlier. Talbot is not deflected from this purpose in the course of the trilogy.

Even on the emotional side, it can be said that Talbot "matures" only in the sense that he shifts from the woman-mistress to the woman-wife (a shift which sharpens the contradiction). There is no real change in Talbot's ideological orientation.

In his encounter with the uncouth Captain Anderson, Talbot knows exactly how to "gentle" him. First, he engages in name-dropping. Later on, when he notices the captain's "unconscious betrayal of his irritation", he decides to "allow the influence of this interview to work for a while and only when he has got the true state of affairs thoroughly grounded in his malevolent head shall I move towards some easiness with him." (ROP, p. 32) Talbot asks his godfather: "In politics do we not attempt to use only just sufficient force to achieve a desired end?" (p. 32) His compromise, the capacity for quick reconciliation with the stench, has, I believe, some political implication of contamination. Talbot, and by extension the social class he stands for, is already entering a region which is not designed originally for him. He describes the old ship as both, a "confounded vessel" and a "monstrous vessel." (p. 19) But it is precisely that same ship which symbolizes, as I will argue, Talbot's psyche. Talbot's need to compromise makes him repress some of his desires, especially those available to him in his aristocratic atmosphere. Therefore, the ship itself stands metaphorically as an instrument of suppression of his

desires and wishes for a larger, cleaner space. It constitutes an analogy of the structure of his own psyche.

This is how Talbot describes the ship:

Of course a ship never sleeps. There was always at least a part of the watch on duty, to say nothing of the officer of the watch and his doggy. I got into my oilskins and made my way through the moonlight to the quarterdeck. Lieutenant Benet was leaning over the forrard rail. (FDB, p. 51)

A close reading of this passage will reveal to us the parallel between the ship and Talbot's psyche especially in its two agencies, the ego and the id (the unconscious). The "ship never sleeps" recalls the ego whose function is to preserve the self and which, therefore, stays awake. This is corroborated exactly in the second sentence where at least a part (the ego) of the watch is on duty. The officer of the watch will represent in this case the "super-ego" with all its demands on the ego. The struggle between Benet, whose name is significantly mentioned almost every time the ship is described, and Talbot represents a clear analogy of the struggle between the ego and the unconscious. With his flowing yellow hair, flamboyance and irrepressibility, Benet comes to represent the unconscious whose "raids" are both dreaded and mysteriously craved for by Talbot. Another character whose religious enthusiasm is clearly exhibited in the trilogy is Lieutenant Charles Summers. Let us now move to another

passage and see how these three characters, Talbot, Summers and Benet, stand in relation to each other:

Charles nodded and turned to his men. He went round, as I saw, and personally checked the security of the lashing that held all this heavy gear ready for use. If care and forethought could secure our survival he would provide it! I had a sudden awareness of the two of them, Benet and Charles, the one brilliantly putting us at risk, the other soberly and constantly taking care! (FDB, P. 56)

It does not need much reflection on our part after this textual confirmation to be convinced of the "psychical" representation of the guardians (officers) of the ship. Charles Summers, the officer of the watch, represents the super-ego with his care and forethought.

With this mapping of the ship or rather Talbot's psyche symbolized in the ship, it is important to remember that an issue of great significance is bound to crop up if this structure is to remain in a working condition. The subject of sexuality, which constitutes one of the major themes in the trilogy, is dealt with extensively. It is a fact that the subject of sexuality constitutes a nightmare for a ruling class if that class is intent on having any stable social order. Sexuality is always "anarchic" in its nature. In order to discuss this significant theme, we have to have access to the images and symbols through which characters express their sexuality. We have to remember the factor of repression and the anger it generates in a suppressed sexuality. And since it is

mostly an irrepressible instinct, it becomes in such a society both an absence and a presence. The text itself provides us with the most "appropriate" imagery which reveals the hidden sexuality. This hiddenness is doubly significant in the sense that it is both desired and dreaded. It engenders the theatricals with which Talbot is obsessed and, on the other hand, it creates signs of anxiety over the fear of exposure. Hence the imagery of sexuality. What could be more of a phallic symbol than the huge cylinder of the foremast which penetrates the heart of the feminine ship? Yet it is precisely the operation on this cylinder which Talbot dreads. The operation is to be done by Benet. The imagery provides us with a neat indication of the phallic symbol.

The huge cylinder of the foremast came down through the deckhead and appeared to enter a square block of wood. Since the mast was a yard in diameter, the size of the wooden block into which it was set may possibly be imagined. I suppose it was something like a six-foot cube. What a tree! I had never seen such a block of wood in my life. This in turn rested on a member which ran the ship's length above the keel—the keelson. Facing me on the after side of the shoe was a sheet of iron with huge bolts projecting. These then were the bolts of iron which had been made red- or white-hot in the midst of all this tinderlike wood at the risk of turning the whole ship into a bonfire!...

(FDB, p. 111, my emphases)

Talbot's "understanding" of sexuality is to be explained in two different ways. He has two different attitudes towards Miss Zenobia and Miss Chumley. There is a disjunction in Talbot's concept of sexuality in the

sense that he "bestows" the physical side of love on Miss Zenobia while Miss Chumley is offered the spiritual, Platonic side. About the former, Talbot speaks in terms of conquest and war, and Zenobia's body becomes only a territory to be conquered. It is the physical enjoyment among other things that galvanizes Talbot into attacking Zenobia and gaining her favours:

I was out of my hutch, had her by the wrist and jerked her back in with me before she could even pretend a startled cry!.... We wrestled for a moment by the bunk, she with a nicely calculated exertion of strength that only just failed to resist me, I with mounting passion. My sword was in my hand and I boarded her! She retired in disorder to the end of the hutch where the canvas basin awaited her in its iron loop. I attacked once more and the hoop collapsed.... I called on her to yield, and she maintained a brave if useless resistance that fired me even more. I bent for the *main course* (italicised in the text), we flamed against the ruins of the canvas basin and among the trampled pages of my little library. We flamed upright. Ah she did yield at last to my conquering arms, was overcome, rendered up all the tender spoils of war!

(ROP, pp. 85-86, emphases are mine)

A feminist approach (perhaps inevitable) to this passage will certainly see Talbot described as a male chauvinist. The war vocabulary, "wrestled", "boarded", "attacked", "yield", "overcome", "conquering", and "spoils of war" will confirm the reader in her belief. However, a sense of theatre does creep into this sexual encounter and Talbot admits frankly that "we were now, as your lordship may observe, in about act three of an inferior drama. She was to be the deserted victim and I the heartless

villain." (ROP, p. 88) These words may recall here the situation described in Free Fall between the two characters, Mountjoy and Beatrice, the villain and the victim.

This realm of "experience" with its concomitant theatricality is not preventable but what makes it objectionable is the fact that it is interspersed with two "foibles" that Talbot exhibits very clearly. They can be summarized as possessivism and envy. Although love-making is seen as a theatricality, this theatricality is taken to extremes. Talbot is worried only when his own reputation is at stake. As for Zenobia, she is deserted (like Beatrice) the moment she is had. Talbot's egoism is exhibited very clearly when he refuses to give up Zenobia even after admitting that a sense of commercialism surrounds their sexual activity: "I caught myself up. Even to pretend that there might be something about this commerce that was *commercial* seemed an unnecessary insult." (ROP, p. 88) Talbot even allows himself at the moment of sexual conquest to notice that Zenobia conducts herself with a nicely calculated exertion of strength that only just failed to resist him. We recall once again how Beatrice in Free Fall jumps the gun.

Talbot shows his possessivism and envy (Mountjoy's jealousy) when he realizes that Miss Zenobia might give her favours to Billy Rogers:

Afterwards I went out to take my usual constitutional in the waist; and lo! there by the break of the fo'castle was "Miss Zenobia" in earnest conversation with Billy Rogers! Plainly, he is her sailor Hero who can "*Wate no longer*". With what kindred spirit did he concoct his misspelt but elaborate billet-doux? Well, if he attempts to come aft and visit her in her hutch I will see him flogged for it. (ROP, p. 273)

This motif of flogging already appears in Golding's The Spire: "So he took a discipline and lashed himself hard...." (p. 65) It reappears later in the novel accompanied by Jocelin's rage at the drunken man: "My son! You must use my authority. Send a man on a good horse to the Three Tuns. Let him take a whip with him, and let him use it as necessary!" (p. 110) Here we descend straightaway from the metaphysical to what is literally physical. The body, whether idealized or dismembered, becomes a focal point for many of Golding's "protagonists". Mary Lovell's body is conjured up in Fincher Martin's dreams in a way which shows the slavish adherence to the sensual erotic parts of a woman's body: "But combined with the furious musk, the little guarded breasts, the surely impregnable virtue, they were the death sentence of Actaeon." (PM, p. 148) This preoccupation with women's bodies is again a major theme in The Paper Men, where one of the characters is again called Mary. Wilfred Barclay describes how "my dreams were about femininity *tout court*." (p. 69) Perhaps it is not an insignificant remark to mention that Golding seems to be obsessed with the name Mary. We have Mary Lovell, Mary

Lou, and finally in a disguised form Marion Chumley. It is important to see the implication of this as a contradiction embodied in the woman's body itself. The woman's body is at once the preserver and destroyer of virginity and innocence. Edmund Talbot is torn between the lure of sexuality (anarchy) and the need to keep the stability of the social order (he already belongs to the nobility). Thus the contradiction may be seen to inhere in the hymen itself. But as I mentioned earlier, the spiritual side takes over and Talbot exults in describing this idealized romantic beauty: "Oh, *thou*, Marion, rising from the meekest and deepest of curtsies, sum of all music, all poetry, distracted scraps of which with their newly irradiated meaning tumbled through my mind!" (CQ, p. 88) Talbot has the balance just about right. While he wishes that Miss Zenobia "would vanish like a soap bubble or anything evanescent" (ROP, p. 88), he is ready to abandon his cabin to Miss Chumley and sleep in the orlop or the bilges (CQ, p. 91). But what is more important than this contrast is the fact that Nature plays a significant role in the way Talbot chooses his standards of beauty. This attitude has, of course, its prejudiced implications in the sense that we are made to think that it is nature itself rather than our judgement that is responsible for this division between what is beautiful and what is not. In this case, it is usually the outside features of a person which decide whether they are beautiful or not.

What is at risk here is the removal of all that is spiritual since the beauty of outside appearances is ultimately a matter of personal judgement.

Marion Chumley is seen by Talbot as an aesthetic object. This aesthetic is likely to partake, as Terry Eagleton put it, "at once of the rational and the real."<sup>24</sup> In his book, The Ideology of the Aesthetic, Eagleton takes us back to the eighteenth century to tell us how "Aesthetics is born as a discourse of the body."<sup>25</sup> In the same book, he writes:

Once in possession of such a "science of the concrete"— "a contradiction in terms", Schopenhauer was later to call it—there is no need to fear that history and the body will slip through the net of conceptual discourse to leave one grasping at empty space. Within the dense welter of our material life, with all its amorphous flux, certain objects stand out in a sort of perfection dimly akin to reason, and these are known as the beautiful. A kind of ideality seems to inform their sensuous existence from within, rather than floating above it in some Platonic space; so that a rigorous logic is here revealed to us in matter itself, felt instantly on the pulses. Because these are objects which we can agree to be beautiful, not by arguing or analysing but just by looking and seeing, a spontaneous consensus is brought to birth within our creaturely life, bringing with it the promise that such a life, for all its apparent arbitrariness and obscurity, might indeed work in some sense very like a rational law....<sup>26</sup>

Marion Chumley's beauty is indeed idealized since it is nature, in Talbot's understanding, that provides her with those beautiful features. Her beauty partakes of the rational and the real simultaneously:

Miss Chumley smiled\_\_Marion smiled! The corners of her mouth turned up\_\_my very heart jumps at the memory\_\_it

is a sweet pleasure to record it. Yet even when Marion was not smiling nature had provided her with a mouth which made her look not merely good-humoured but as if she were enjoying a joke of such power it was a source of permanent pleasure. (CQ, p. 89)

This argument about nature is emphasized in Talbot's discourse because it adds another dimension to Golding's own vision. Talbot's attitude towards Colley is influenced by his concept of nature. What is emphasized by Talbot earlier in the narrative is not the spiritual teaching which Colley offers but rather a description of his physical deformities. Later on, Talbot's opinion is entirely reversed and he feels ashamed of his prejudiced view. It is precisely at this moment in Talbot's discourse that references to Colley's style begin to appear. The following is the first description of what nature affords Colley:

Imagine if you can a pale and drawn countenance to which nature has afforded no gift beyond the casual assemblage of features; a countenance moreover to which she has given little in the way of flesh but been prodigal of bone. Then open the mouth wide, furnish the hollows under the meagre forehead with staring eyes from which tears were on the point of starting\_\_do all that, I say, and you will still come short of the comic humiliation that for a fleeting moment met me eye to eye. (ROP, pp. 42-43)

What we are offered, in brief, is the fact that Colley is ugly. But in order to avoid such straightforward, audacious, hurtful truths in his discourse, Talbot hastens to make sure that his narrative itself might compensate for such dreadful description. What the reader is given is

a picture of "comic humiliation". But how can humiliation be comic? And why should there be any mention of the word humiliation in this discourse if Talbot's intention behind it is innocent? Of course, not that Talbot should not be free to express himself as writing subject the way he chooses, but what we see here is a clearly prejudiced picture of things. But what is more significant is the fact that nature itself seems now to be endowed with a consciousness. In other words, it turns out that nature can think. How else would the reader account for the fact that nature has afforded no gift beyond the casual assemblage of features. Not only that but she has been prodigal of bone. What we end up with is a notion of a discriminatory nature rather than human subjects who themselves differentiate between what is beautiful and what is ugly. In allowing nature to do the business of differentiating between beauty and ugliness, Talbot unconsciously relieves himself of the accusation of prejudice. Nature herself is behind Marion Chumley's beauty rather than Talbot's own judgement. But if this is really the case, in other words, if it is nature herself "who" is responsible for our beauty or the lack of it, then surely what is created here is a contradictory concept of nature. Nature is at once glorified in the person of Marion Chumley and degraded in the person of Robert Colley. It is at once the source of beauty and ugliness.

In order to understand this obsession with the concept of nature fully, we must remember the effect Shakespeare seems to have on the writing subject. The Shakespearean concept which Talbot is possessed with is nothing less than Shakespeare's own understanding of nature especially in his sonnets: "I am this very moment possessed by a positively and literally Shakespearean concept." (ROP, p. 94) The fact that Colley is associated with this concept is made very clear in Talbot's discourse: "A new curiosity mingled with my *Shakespearean* purposes for him." (ROP, p. 97) Colley is described more than once as having odd features by nature:

Nature has pitched\_\_no, the verb is too active. Well then, on some corner of Time's beach, or on the muddy rim of one of her more insignificant rivulets, there have been washed together casually and indifferently a number of features that Nature had tossed away as of no use to any of her creations. (ROP, p. 67)

Nature does seem to think. It might be that we detect in this passage as in many others a tendency to fine writing as Talbot expects: "Your lordship may detect in the fore-going a tendency to *fine writing*..." (ROP, p. 67), but Talbot's remarks about Colley's features are stultifying and discriminatory. They are most probably based on Shakespeare's eleventh sonnet:

Let those whom nature hath not made for store,  
Harsh, featureless, and rude, barrenly perish:  
Look whom she best endow'd, she gave the more;  
Which bounteous gift thou shouldst in bounty cherish,  
She carv'd thee for her seal, and meant thereby,  
Thou shouldst print more, not let that copy die.

What we should bear in mind is the fact that some of Shakespeare's own sonnets do have concepts which concern "natural" discrimination. They concentrate on the outside rather than on the inside. What Shakespeare is infatuated with in some of his sonnets is the perfect beauty of his friend who nevertheless happens to be cruel, unprovident, and possessed with murderous hate against himself. The speaker in the sonnets reaches a point where he is almost totally enslaved by the Fair friend:

Lord of my love, to whom in vassalage  
Thy merit hath my duty strongly knit;

(sonnet 26)

BEING your slave what should I do but tend,  
Upon the hours, and times of your desire?

(sonnet 57)

Talbot shows not a dissimilar attitude of servitude towards Marion Chumley. He is critical on the one hand of Mr Cumbershum who does not behave like a gentleman: "He is one Mr Cumbershum, holding the king's Commission and therefore to be accounted a gentleman though he sucked in his ale with a nauseating an indifference to polite usage as you would find in a carter." (ROP, p. 20) Later on in the narrative when he begs all the dances of Marion, she answers: "It would be improper, sir. You must know that surely!" (CQ, p. 103) To that, Talbot replies: "Then I am an advocate of impropriety...." (CQ, p. 103) Talbot, however, is a romantic who can soar high into those

regions of romance and conjure up some really chivalric images:

So there I was, wishing with a sudden urgency that my wounds were real\_\_not injuries but wounds! I wished I had led a forlorn hope and come back heroically wounded, wounded so severely that I must be nursed and by whom but this discovered angel?... Like some knight in an old tale Edmund Fitz-Henry Talbot, with his whole career to make, spent those hours asleep on his shield in the ruined chapel of love! Forgive a young man, a young fool, his ardours and ecstasies!

(CQ, pp. 96-97)

The important thing about this passage is that what we see here is only an imaginative adventure rather than a possibility in that industrial era. There is a sense of yearning or nostalgia for that lost realm of chivalry and romantic love. But Golding's own despair of the return of such a blissful age is deepened not only through the irreversible historical process of industrialization but also through its concomitant erosion of innocence. With the age of industrialization, we step into an age of experience and calculation. That is why in the trilogy, Colley's vision is attractive with its complete innocence and perhaps its unachievable utopian objectives. It is no accident that Blake's Songs of Innocence published 1789 were orchestrated by Songs of Experience published 1794. Talbot's view of how nature affords her features in a discriminatory manner is polarized by Colley's vision of people united through love and forgiveness. It is Blake rather than Shakespeare who offers an alternative to the

divisiveness of nature or of the human form. It is through the divine image that we must look at man. In "The Divine Image", Blake writes:

And all must love the human form,  
 In heathen, Turk, or Jew;  
 Where Mercy, Love, and Pity dwell  
 There God is dwelling too.

It is precisely this Blakean alternative that Colley advocates time and again. At the same time, it is this same alternative which Talbot fails to understand. He fails to see God's creatures in their totality firstly because of his egoism or incurable narcissism and secondly because he is a calculating character. Therefore, Talbot's romanticism is contradictorily not the innocent type but the calculating one which empties that romanticism of its own essential features. Talbot does not believe in himself as a romantic:

I still cannot tell why tears came to my eyes! A grown man, a sane, really calculating man, a political creature to have water spring up behind his eyelids so that he is hard put to it to keep them from falling out down his face!  
 (CQ, p. 95)

In his analysis of Macbeth, Terry Eagleton describes a "similar" situation to the one above:

Macduff, whose family is slaughtered by Macbeth, is advised by Malcolm to "Dispute it like a man", to which his swift riposte is: "I shall do so; But I must also feel it like a man." Malcolm's "man" is the patriarchal stereotype of courage and emotional control; Macduff himself appeals beyond this ideology

of gender to the common humanity which cuts below it, the level of shared compassion where differences of gender are not finally very important.<sup>27</sup>

We have already seen Talbot's emotional control in his sexual encounter with Zenobia where his calculating nature proves infallible. This calculating attitude is emphasised more than once in the narrative: "A settled rage had converted me from my, dare I say, usual calculating attitude to one of wishing for nothing so much as the opportunity to vent it on someone physically!" (CQ, pp. 45-46) Talbot manages to vent his rage on another occasion when he cuffs Tommy Taylor: "Young Tommy was a bit lopsided after I cuffed him. Boys must be educated, you know!" (FDB, p. 54) This mode of education is popular with Captain Anderson too: "I'm deaf in me right earhole where the captain clouted me." (FDB, p. 53)

We have seen many aspects of Talbot's character, but the calculating side in him is developed elaborately into something distinctive and typical of the individual in that age of rising capitalism. A different mechanism of exchange distinguishes the capitalist era from earlier historical periods. Talbot is obsessed with the story of Glaucus and Diomedes in Homer, a story which tells much about human relationships in the ancient times:

"I have not been so moved by a man's kindness\_\_it is exactly like the story of Glaucus and Diomedes in Homer. You know they exchanged armour\_\_gold armour on the one side for bronze armour on the other\_\_my dear fellow\_\_I have promised you the bronze armour of my godfather's patronage\_\_and you have given me gold!"

(FDB, p. 29)

Talbot already feels that his *quid pro quo* falls short of that given him by Charles Summers. But although this feeling might give the impression, rightly, that Talbot is sad, it is ultimately from the unconscious that he speaks, something which has the implication that human relations might ultimately be measured on the basis of exchange exclusively. It is the unconscious itself which is in danger of becoming policed by a new idea of exchange. The ancient way of exchanging bronze for gold leaves room for generosity and forgiveness from one side leaving the other side satisfied and grateful for that generosity. It is exactly when this exchange needs to be measured precisely that everything begins to be transformed into a commodity. Talbot admits that Glaucus and Diomedes might have exchanged things recklessly:

I took down the Iliad, therefore, and read in book zeta the story of Glaucus and Diomedes. They had exchanged armour recklessly, it seemed, trading bronze armour for gold. I could not decide whether my determination to see Charles promoted was gold or bronze— certainly his care for me, getting me bathed and changed as if he were my old nurse, was gold in the circumstances! (FDB, p. 64)

We notice that Charles Summers's side of the bargain is already done while Talbot's exchange is only a promise. Talbot shows signs of "instinctive" intelligence when he weighs the pros and cons of his encounter with Captain Anderson. This psychological insight enables Talbot to

placate the captain's anger: "I decided I must proceed on the principle of the use of *least force*. What would move Captain Anderson to do as I wished? Would there be anything more powerful with him than self-interest?" (ROP, p. 138) We recall an exactly similar situation between Dean Jocelin and Pangall. The first uses the least force and the principle of self-interest:

"Didn't you say once that this is your house? There was sinful pride in that, but also loyalty and service. Never think you aren't understood and valued, my son.... The house they will have to guard and cherish will be far more glorious than this one. Think, man. In the middle of it this will stand up\_\_\_" and passionately he held out the spire\_\_\_"and they will tell their children in their turn; "This thing was done in the days of our father."

(The Spire, p. 61)

Pangall's reply to this is: "Do you make a fool of me too?" In the trilogy, we can see that we are moving towards a society where the individual has to calculate and predict before his/her needs are fulfilled. The whole society emerges as a calculating society and trust is eradicated. But what is at risk here is the very flexibility of human relationships. With this calculating attitude, Talbot arrests the fluidity of human emotions and in doing so shows his own lack of understanding these emotions:

At length I began to consider the captain once more and try to predict his possible course of action. Does not the operation of a *statist* lie wholly in his power to affect the future of other people; and is not that power founded directly on his ability to predict their behaviour? Here, thought I, was the chance to observe

the success or failure of my prentice hand! How would the man respond to the hint I had given him?

(ROP, pp. 144-145)

Golding is certainly aware of his narrator's attempt to arrest the natural flow of spontaneous reaction. Therefore, in this process of initiation into a new rite of passage, namely, a new piece of wisdom, Talbot is subjected to more tutoring. We can see very clearly Golding's hand directing the narrative: "Wrong again, Talbot! Learn another lesson, my boy! You fell at that fence! Never again must you lose yourself in the complacent contemplation of a first success! Captain Anderson did not come down." (ROP, p. 148) This injunction can be read both ways, as a self-addressed reproach and as an admonition by Golding himself to his narrator. The narrator is actually thrown into this trap of miscalculation twice. Thinking that Captain Anderson and Benet are antagonistic towards Charles Summers, Talbot does not expect them to recommend him for promotion. But as we learn later from the narrative, they do recommend Summers for promotion to the disappointment of Talbot's calculation: "I wondered for a moment whether to tell him [Charles] that Benet and Anderson had both recommended him for his present position but dismissed the idea at once." (FDB, p. 272) Although this happens at the end of the trilogy or the voyage, Talbot still shows signs of resistance to change towards frankness and recognition.

His inveterate adherence to the prediction of human behaviour is significant in throwing light on the fear which underlies the statist's operations when he is faced by the tide of change in the status of things. This is precisely Golding's argument about the importance of the organic vision which allows for the permanent change in what conditions our human existence. This is an invitation on Golding's part to depart from the dictum: "seeing is believing" which is repeated twice in Fire Down Below (p. 21) and whose echo reverberates almost on every page in The Spire. But as a politician and a statist, we must not discredit Talbot completely. He has a most persuasive style when he exhausts his faulty predictions:

Who was I to dip into the nature of the man, cast the very waters of his soul and by that chirurgically experiment declare how his injustice would run its course? I sat before this journal, upbraiding myself for my folly in my attempt to play the politician and manipulator of his fellow men! I had to own that my knowledge of the springs of human action was still in the egg. (ROP, p. 146)

It is obvious how this psychological insight into his own mind makes Talbot more of an agreeable character than a disagreeable one. But it is important to realize that by adopting this attitude, Talbot is still harbouring a deceptive intention. The only reason why Talbot discredits his own predictions is because he realizes that he would not sound convincing if he does not discredit them. Therefore, he instinctively and "politically" switches to

the other extreme to maintain the reader's trust in what he does. Talbot is not a critic of other characters' behaviour only but of his own too. This method of allowing the narrator who is at the same time the major character the chance to question his own thoughts is important in convincing the reader that she is in the hands of a mature narrator. But Talbot's oscillation between two stances, experimentation and resignation, is significant in another sense.

We know that the early years of the nineteenth century and even before witnessed an upheaval in scientific research which accompanied a change of attitude towards language itself. Wordsworth wondered what kind of language to use for his poetry. There was an epistemological crisis on the horizon. Talbot's crisis of knowledge is expressed precisely in the words "soul" and "chirurgonly experiment". Romantic poets of that period were searching for an appropriate method of reconciling a fugitive idea with a hard material reality. Consequently, the philosophical poem was "born".

Poetry is elevated in Golding's trilogy to a high status and recognized as the language of the future. Moreover, it is recognized as the language of the "fair sex". Prose, on the other hand, is associated with the merchants and described as "the speech of merchants to each other." (CQ, p. 207) By focusing on poetry, Golding insists on the importance of imagination and perhaps on

the significance of giving more freedom to the "feminine" part of literature. Mr Benet advises Talbot as to the significance of poetical communication:

"My dear Mr Talbot. Once faced with the necessity of communicating with the most sensitive, most delicate of creatures\_\_only poetry will make that connection. It is their language, sir. Theirs is the language of the future. Women have dawned. Once they have understood what syllables, rather than prose, should fall from those lips, women will rise in splendour like the sun!" (CQ, p. 206)

The significance of this passage can be measured from the emphasis on the feminine. The part of the human society neglected for centuries has dawned at last. Women are associated with poetry in the sense that they will liberate humanity from the shackles of earthly prose, from the shackles of merchants with their commodities. They are judged to have a share in the purity of the sun. Not only is poetry the language of or for women, but also a substitute for the presence of the beloved:

It is true\_\_I am a witness to it that not poetry but the attempt at poetry is a substitute however poor for the presence of the beloved. I was above myself and saw things plainly as from a mountain top. Whether it be Milton's God or Shakespeare's Dark Lady and even darker Gentleman\_\_whether it be Lesbia or Amaryllis or devil take it, Corydon, the Object lifts the mind to a sphere where only the irrational in language makes any sense. (CQ, p. 213)

What is confirmed here is the Lacanian remark that the symbol is the death of the thing when even the attempt at poetry is a substitute however poor for the presence of

the beloved. The connection between poetry and irrationality is emphasised again two pages later in Close Quarters:

I had read much poetry in an endeavour to understand a side of life which I thought closed to me by the extreme rationality of my mind and coolness of my temperament! (CQ, p. 215)

But although it is Talbot who speaks of poetry the way he does, it is Colley who ventures into the high regions of poetical vision. Talbot refuses to consider himself as a poet: "I am no poet." (CQ, p. 206) I take the word "poetical" in Colley's case to mean the poetic response to the world as Vico perceives it rather than composing verses, something which Colley does not do. Colley is a poet not by writing poetry but through the "poetic wisdom" that informs his responses to his world. In Structuralism and Semiotics, Terence Hawkes discusses Vico's perception of "primitive" man as follows:

The master key of the new science lay in Vico's decisive perception that so-called "primitive" man, when properly assessed, reveals himself not as childishly ignorant and barbaric, but as instinctively and characteristically "poetic" in his response to the world, in that he possesses an inherent "poetic wisdom" (*sapienza poetica*) which informs his responses to his environment and casts them in the form of a "metaphysics" of metaphor, symbol and myth.<sup>24</sup>

Colley is indirectly described by Talbot as a barbarian, as an individual far below his standards of education:

Indeed, his schooling should have been the open fields, with stone-collecting and bird-scaring, his

university the plough. Then all those features so irregularly scarred by the tropic sun might have been bronzed into a unity and one, modest expression animated the whole! (ROP, p. 67)

But it is precisely Colley's vision which puts Talbot to shame. The powerful vision with its message of love and forgiveness is something beyond Talbot's reach. With his insistence on fine writing, Talbot forgets that it is love which kindles Colley's imagination that he lacks. It is true that Talbot's own narrative is shot through with psychological insights, but these insights are bridled by a calculating self and "the splendid nature of my colonial employment" (ROP, p. 28) Whereas he demands to be called "sir", "say "sir" when you speak to me!" (CQ, p. 198), the least gesture of friendship from him brings tears to Colley's eyes. This reminds us of the theme of recognition in Lord of the Flies. Colley's letter has a haunting effect on Talbot:

That unhappy shrimp of a man, Parson Colley, had nevertheless in his letter to his sister, as far as I could remember, unconsciously used the massive instrument of the English tongue with a dexterity which called up our ship and her people\_\_I included\_\_ as if by magic! (CQ, p. 5)

There are many reasons as to why Colley's letter or literary style is more elevatory than Talbot's narration. (We must remember that Golding is at his best in the trilogy: Both Talbot's narration and Colley's letter are the fruit of Golding's imagination.) In Colley, we have

the integration of organic vision as Talbot admits. Integration here does not mean addition only but rather welding the narrated material into the texture of narrative as if that is the only natural place it could fit in. Colley does this by his clear vision of the world in the sense that all human beings are equal in the eyes of God. He does not conceal in his narrative his own demerits. He is portrayed as a loving character and that is why he is capable of seeing the ship as a noble vessel. Another distinctive feature is that Colley can integrate any material because he has a particularly mythological view of his country. He sees Britain as Old Albion:

Having escaped the clutches of a horde of *nameless* creatures on the foreshore and having been conveyed out to our noble vessel in a most expensive manner ... I found myself facing a young officer who carried a spyglass under his arm. Instead of addressing me as one gentleman ought to address another he turned to one of his fellows and made the following observation. "Oh G\_\_\_, a parson! That will send old Rumble-guts flying into the foretop!" This was but a sample of what I was to suffer. I will not detail the rest, for it is now many days, my dear sister, since we bade farewell to the shores of Old Albion....

(ROP, p. 186)

Colley's transformation into an experienced character is shown only after much suffering is inflicted on him. But his prayer, wisdom and love help to keep his own innocence intact. But this time his innocence is not a childish one but one which is born consciously and determinedly out of suffering, experience and understanding. It is true that he dies at the end, but it

is only through this death that he haunts the ship till the very end of the journey. This might illuminate what Walter Benjamin says about the proportion of death and meaning. Colley's sense of the greatness of God and the universe is shown in passage after passage:

Though unable to eat I *have* been out, and oh, my dear sister, how remiss I have been to repine at my lot! It is an earthly, nay, an oceanic paradise! The sunlight is warm and like a natural benediction. The sea is brilliant as the tails of Juno's birds (<I mean the peacock>) that parade the terraces of Manston Place!

(ROP, p. 187)

In these references to mythology, Colley elevates the spirit from the earthly concerns to an alternative place where only imagination rules supreme. Moreover, he uses the plural "we" in an attempt to depart from the individual "I" that Talbot engages himself in. Naturally this is Golding's consciousness at work since Colley is purposefully mistaken in his estimation of Talbot. Talbot thinks of himself as a very important character: "Is this fair or just? Do their lordships not realize what a future Secretary of State they have cast so casually on the waters?" (ROP, p. 14) In other words, Talbot's obsession with his "self" puts him at risk of forgetting about the other characters, something proven from his "narcissistic" narrative. Consequently, his descriptions of other characters seem narrower or more limited than Colley's. For this reason, Talbot's judgement of other characters is always contradictory: "I admire Benet. But he is too

perfect." (FDB, p. 5) Later on, Talbot reverses his opinion about the same character: "Does Benet not realize how dangerous the attempt is? He is such a fool!" (FDB, p. 33) This oscillation of opinion does not reflect the elusiveness of Benet's character but rather Talbot's own uncertainty. Colley's vision by contrast encompasses the whole ship, not parts of it:

What has remained with me apart from a lively memory of my apprehensions is not only a sense of HIS AWFULNESS and a sense of the majesty of HIS creation. It is a sense of the splendour of our vessel rather than her triviality and minuteness! It is as if I think of her as a separate world, a universe in little in which we must pass our lives and receive our reward or punishment. (ROP, p. 191-92)

The main difference between Colley and Talbot is a difference of vision. Colley's vision is one of integration:

They are *seamen*, and I begin to understand the word. You may observe them when they are released from duty to stand with arms linked or placed about each other's shoulders. They sleep sometimes on the scrubbed planking of the deck, one it may be, with his head pillowed on another's breast. The innocent pleasures of friendship\_\_in which I, alas, have as yet so little experience\_\_the joy of kindly association or even that bond between two persons which, Holy Writ directs us, passes the love of women, must be the cement that holds their company together. (ROP, p. 214)

What we see in this passage is not, of course, the truth about the seamen on board the ship. And it is Colley himself who is more innocent than the rest of the characters. On the other hand, we cannot say that Colley's

vision is meant as irony, since it is a vision which is meant to be innocent. Colley continues to conjure up mythological figures to draw a comparison between them and the seamen:

For it was as if these beings, these young men, or some of them at least and one of them in particular, were of the giant breed. I called to mind the legend of Talos, the man of bronze whose artificial frame was filled with liquid fire. It seemed to me that such an evidently fiery liquid as the one (it is *rum*) which a mistaken benevolence and paternalism provides for the sea-service was the proper *ichor* (this was the blood of the Grecian Gods, supposedly) for beings of such semi-divinity, of such truly heroic proportions!

(ROP, p. 216)

Colley's obsession with the idea of the seamen cemented together by a strong bond is in striking contrast to Talbot's view of them. Talbot is reproached by Mr Askew for his condescending attitude towards the seamen:

".... In the entertainment when Joss read that bit about "Lord Talbot" if you'd stood up and bowed with your hand on your heart and a smile on your face we'd have took our corn from your hand as sweet as a miller's donkey. Only you puckered up like...."

(CQ, p. 159)

But this reproach does not bring out the shame that Talbot feels later. It is the mistaken praise which he receives from Colley that makes him haunted by the echo of his voice. As I mentioned earlier, it is only in the trilogy that we see Golding at his best contrasting two viewpoints and bringing whatever effects he wants to his reader. The fact that Colley dies without discovering the true

identity of Talbot is significant in increasing Talbot's shame at the end:

It was then that I remembered my own half-formed intention to bring Zenobia and Robert James Colley together to rid myself of a possible embarrassment. It was so like Deverel's jest I came near to detesting myself. When I realized how he and I had talked, and how he must have thought me like-minded with the "Nobel family" my face grew hot with shame. Where will all this end? (ROP, p. 269)

All this does end in the long dream that is so far Golding's best attempt to fuse so many issues together. Golding gives the rein to Talbot's imagination to conjure up whatever there is left of repressed thoughts of shame and sexuality. It is worth mentioning that it is the "longest" dream in Golding's fiction. It is certainly a proof of Freud's recognition that authors are better than others at conjuring up symbolic dreams. I will quote the content of the dream in its entirety to show Talbot's unconscious at work:

I got out early into the waist, having been roused by the shouts from the deck.

"Fairly the fall about! Hazard the handybilly Rogers!" And then the answering cry came from forrard\_\_ "Lie all down handsomely together!"

She was there plainly to be seen on our starboard bow! Alcyone! She was disarmed completely, the masts lying about her, white sails spread on the water, the sailors hauling away and singing. The chant came to us clear over the waters.

"Where have you been all the day, Billy Boy?"

We drew somehow alongside her. Our sailors were miraculously dextrous in shortening sail.

"Stun the royals there!"

Sir Henry had climbed the shrouds of what was left of their mizzen.

"Anderson, you see all this? My cursed first lieutenant has fairly fucked us. "Bellamy," I said to

him. "Eat the main course or you'll have the masts off us.""

And She was there on the deck, her arms outstretched! Tears of joy streamed down her cheeks! She came towards me! We merged\_\_

It was Miss Granham. She had no stays\_\_I wrestled with her but could not get away. No wonder the two ships were laughing and I was unclothed\_\_

(CQ, p. 222)

The line "where have you been all the day, Billy Boy?" is reproduced from the first part of the trilogy. It is part of the song that Colley sings when he is inebriated by the drink from the vicious sailors. This line is mentioned on page 115 in Rites of Passage. Later on, Talbot relates what happens: "Oh, doubtless the man consented, jeeringly, and encouraged the ridiculous, schoolboy trick\_\_even so, not Rogers but Colley committed the *fellatio* that the poor fool was to die of when he remembered it." (ROP, p. 277) But in a way, Colley is purged from shame through death. The fact that he dies before Talbot discovers his opinion of him leaves the latter restless for having no opportunity to apologize to him. The dream is a mechanism for conjuring up Colley's spirit so that Talbot can apologize and come to terms with his guilt and cruel attitude towards Colley. The next disjointed section of the dream concerns Marion Chumley, another character who disappears before Talbot has the chance to attain a sexual intercourse with her. He dreams of white sails which are probably a symbol of wedding and union. But again we detect the phallic symbol in "the

masts lying about her" which probably refer to Benet who was on the ship with Marion and Deverel who escapes to Alcyone. Talbot's envy is stated just before the dream:

It was driving me, a sane and calculating man, to acts of sheer folly\_\_why (and this was a new dash of poison in the mixture) she might well be devoted to the man himself and he not know[sic] it in his foolish obsession with a woman old enough to be his mother!

(CQ, p. 219)

Talbot remembers "Deverel! Handsome Jack" (CQ, p. 180) with bitterness. His hope of Alcyone staying near is expressed in "she was dismayed completely". The memory of Sir Henry is a reminder of cuckoldry which is again a reference to women. Sir Henry's rejoinder to Captain Anderson is narrated earlier with some difference:

"Why, as far as Gib, Captain Anderson, she was positively snoring. I tell you, now and then I had to take a look aloft! My first lieutenant would have the main course off her at a catspaw. I have had to tell him; Bellamy, I have said, this is a frigate, curse it, not a damned company ship. How does your man?"

The differences in the dream section are the introduction of the word "fucked" and "eat the main course". This is a reference to Miss Zenobia. The following section conjures up the image of Marion Chumley again but this time in defiance of Benet's assertion that she has no character (CQ, p. 207). This assertion is of course seen as an injury to Talbot's self-esteem and calculation. Moreover, Talbot tries in the dream to exclude the possibility that Marion might change her mind

about him by emphasising that "she came to me! We merged\_\_" The last section concerns Miss Granham and at this stage the reader can see that Talbot does feel some attachment to her perhaps physically. He mentions his disgust with her at having chosen Mr Prettiman more than once. The scene where Talbot carries Miss Granham is also mentioned earlier. He tells the reader that "... Miss Granham was wearing stays!.... Good God, her waist, her bosom was that of a young woman!" (CQ, pp. 201-202) The last sentence in the dream is both an expression of shame and a desire to be unclothed. This connects back to Colley and the overall theme of shame. Briefly then, Wilfred Barclay's dreams about femininity *tout court* are exquisitely detailed in Talbot's one long dream.

Talbot's process of development from the trivialization of Zenobia's body to the idealization of Marion's beauty is certainly similar to Melanie Klein's concept of the "paranoid-schizoid" position in its two stages. Talbot's attack on Zenobia's body represents his unconscious hatred of separation from land. On the other hand, his encounter with Marion gives him the hope of reunion with land again. Land will stand for the mother's body. However, we learn from Talbot that he feels sad immediately after his attack on Zenobia: "To tell the truth, though irritation was still uppermost in my mind, as I sat down and began to make this entry\_\_and as the entry has progressed\_\_irritation has been subsumed into a kind of

universal sadness...." (ROP, p. 91) Later on, and as if in a compensatory attempt, Talbot lavishes all that his imagination can yield of beautiful epithets on Marion.

Woman herself becomes the locus or the sign of contradiction for Talbot. She is both anarchy and social order. Having had a shot, as it were, at the anarchic side with Zenobia, Talbot now seeks his fortune with the stabilizing force of marriage which is bound to come from Marion Chumley. Talbot and Mountjoy are similar in one point. Both of them seem to blame the woman for the sexual intercourse which happens after the woman is chased. Talbot writes after the sexual encounter with Miss Zenobia: "The fault was hers and she must bear the penalties of her follies as well as the pleasures." (ROP, p. 87) In the penultimate chapter in the third book of the trilogy, the social order is finally stabilized. Talbot is to be locked in holy matrimony with the virgin Marion: "The bishop could not consent to our journeying from India to England while still unmarried. It would be an extremely bad example set in a part of the world only too open to licence of every kind!" (FDB, p. 310) This "stabilizing" conclusion is set in complete contradiction with what goes on earlier in the first book of the trilogy. Talbot's aversion to religion is stated very clearly in Rites of Passage:

But when I heard that the little parson was to be allowed to address us I must own I began to regret my impulsive interference and understood how much I had

enjoyed these few weeks of freedom from the whole paraphernalia of Established Religion. (p. 65)

Moreover, as we have seen earlier, Talbot is capable of swimming freely in the seductive sea of pure sexuality:

In a sentence, having gained the favours of *Venus* I did not wish to inflict the pains of *Lucina*! Yet her abandonment was complete and passionate. I did not think female heat could increase.... (ROP, p. 86)

Talbot seems to hold on to a special slogan: sex, yes, children, no. And yet: "Your great-great-great-great-great-grandmother fairly sprang into my arms!" (FDB, P. 311) Contradiction arises because of this tension within the character of Edmund Talbot. But being a liberal rather than a radical humanist, this tension is "solved" in favour of a stable social order, an order that can, nevertheless, tolerate a bit of frivolity and anarchy every now and then. As long as the condescending, indifferent, opportunistic, calculating liberal statist is ensconced in his position of power, he will have us believe that no harm will come to anyone. But this is not the whole picture in the trilogy.

In his article "Bill and Mr Golding's Daimon", Stephen Medcalf writes:

[Golding] looks somewhat like a bear\_\_only a small bear. It is the hardest thing to hold in one's mind about him and indeed about his whole family that with a force of personality that makes one remember them all as huge, they are actually all\_\_Bill, Ann, David and Judy\_\_short....<sup>229</sup>

It is incumbent upon us to introduce a character that has been lurking in the background if we are to complete our understanding of the trilogy: "This of course was Mr Prettiman. I have made a sad job of his introduction, have I not? You must blame Miss Zenobia. He is short, thick, angry gentleman." (ROP, p. 56) I believe that it is not wrong to suggest that Mr prettiman is Golding's spokesman in the trilogy. Not only do they resemble each other in their stature and anger, but they also speak of the Absolute. Prettiman's "private" vision is communicated only to Talbot:

"Imagine our caravan, we, a fire down below here\_\_ sparks of the Absolute\_\_matching the fire up there\_\_ out there! Moving by cool night through the deserts of this new land towards Eldorado with nothing between our eyes and the Absolute, our ears and the music!"  
 "Yes. I see. It would be\_\_the adventure of adventures!"  
 "You could come too, you know, Edmund. Anyone could come. There is nothing to stop you!" (FDB, p. 219)

For the first time in Golding's fiction, the gates of hope are burst open. We have also seen that poetry is the language of the future. There is also a lot of talk in the trilogy about fire and passion. However, this fiery imagination is tempered by the calculating Edmund Talbot whose temperament is not totally disavowed by Golding. Golding's own hopes are dampened by reality. What we end up with in the trilogy is a desperate attempt at reconciling these two aspects: the fiery imagination arrested by the harsh, crude realities of life. This is

precisely why Talbot's rage is a weak kind of rage. The trilogy ends "appropriately" with Talbot's memory of Prettiman's invitation to Talbot to come with him:

I woke from my dream and wiped my face and stopped trembling and presently worked out that we could not all do that sort of thing. The world must be served, must it not? Only it did cross my mind before I had properly dealt with myself that she had said, or he had said, that I could come too, although I never countenanced the idea. Still there it is.

(FDB, p. 313)

This could be considered the most important passage in Golding's fiction for two reasons. First, these are the last words in the last book in the trilogy. Secondly and more importantly, Golding's whole philosophy is encompassed in this passage. It is not fortuitous that the trilogy ends with a dream from which Talbot wakes up suddenly to think about the world and how it should be served. But the significance of this dream lies in the fact that Talbot can afford to be ambivalent about what is to be done and how it should be done. Talbot does not even remember whether it is Mr Prettiman or Mrs Prettiman who said he could come too. And although Talbot never countenanced the idea, still, there it is. But is Talbot going to come with them beyond the limits of fiction and textuality? In other words, is there an ideology behind the text or is it mere fictional fantasies when Talbot insists that the world must be served?

In other aspects, however, the trilogy becomes a reservoir for Golding's previous themes emerging here and there: the leitmotif of beating and flogging in The Spire and Free Fall, loneliness in Pincher Martin and The Paper Men, Jocelin's joy repeated in Rites of Passage (p. 117), Talbot's dream about femininity prefigured in The Paper Men, Talbot's desire that his journal lie on some shelf reflected in Mountjoy's speculation in Free Fall (p. 8). All these themes and many others, particularly the metaphoricity of language, are fused successfully into the trilogy. But most important of all is the amount of rage poured into every novel Golding has written so far. From Lord of the Flies (1954) to Fire Down Below (1989), Golding's rage against the contradictions of his society is released and recharged for every new book. It is because the reason for these contradictions is not revealed to Golding and because he wants to "resolve" them that his rage is generated in the first place. In other words, Golding's rage is a result of his continuing struggle to solve the riddle of the isness of man. The trilogy, however, takes us a long way towards understanding human relationships. But perhaps Talbot's claim to work hard for the betterment of his own country conceals a kind of rage that is akin to the aggressiveness Lacan discovers in a certain class of people: "... we place no trust in altruistic feeling, we who lay bare the aggressivity that underlies the activity of the

philanthropist, the idealist, the pedagogue, and even the reformer." But whatever the case is, we can rest assured that there is a strong undercurrent of rage in our restless unconscious, and the more we behave complacently and blame the other metaphysical world for the physical atrocities perpetrated in our century, we are in danger of becoming engulfed by this revolutionary rage.

## NOTES

1. Quoted by Miriam Allott, Novelists on the Novel (1959; rpt. London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul and Columbia Univ. Press, 1968), p. xvii.
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10. Tiger, pp. 15-16.
11. Ibid., p. 29.
12. Ibid., p. 37.
13. Quoted by David Punter in his "Blake: Creative and Uncreative Labour," Studies in Romanticism, XVI, No. 4 (Fall 1977), 548.
14. Ibid., 548.
15. James R Baker, "An Interview with William Golding," Twentieth Century Literature, 28, No. 2 (Summer 1982), 160-61.

16. Don Crompton, A View from the Spire: William Golding's Later Novels (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), p. 130.
17. Ibid., p. 130.
18. David Punter, The Romantic Unconscious: A Study in Narcissism and Patriarchy (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1989), p. 2.
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20. Punter, The Romantic Unconscious, p. 11.
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22. Golding, p. 191.
23. Ibid., p. 168.
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25. Ibid., p. 13.
26. Ibid., p. 17.
27. Eagleton, William Shakespeare, p. 100.
28. Terence Hawkes, Structuralism and Semiotics (1977; rpt. London: Methuen, 1986), p. 12.
29. Stephen Medcalf, "Bill and Mr Golding's Daimon," in William Golding: The Man and his Books, ed. John Carey (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1986), p. 30.
30. Jacques Lacan, Ecrits: A Selection, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Tavistock, 1977), p. 7.

## Chapter Eight

### Conclusion: To Criticise or Not to Criticise

"Amid the common sense and good indignation of nineteenth-century Marxism, there stands, like a monument to the frailty of reason, the image of a future which never came to pass"<sup>1</sup> (William Golding)

"It is fundamental to Marxism that the contradictions of class-divided society be reconcilable; without such a possibility, and without the accompanying assumption that reconciliation is desirable, revolutionary action would be pointless."<sup>2</sup> (David Punter)

It was my purpose in the previous chapters to expose different contradictions in Golding's fiction. It is important to ask the question whether these contradictions are dealt with consciously by Golding or whether they sink into a mysterious area where Golding himself is bewildered by them and is consequently unable even to identify them. I say important because had Golding been conscious of these contradictions in the sense that he knew about their causalities, he would have certainly ended his novels in a different way than the desperate annihilation, grief, and total "ignorance" that we see at the end of his novels. Pincher Martin, Lord of the Flies, and The Spire are clear examples of this kind of ending. But some might say that had Golding been aware of the intricate reasons behind these contradictions, he would have probably been unable to write any of his novels in the first place. In other words, it is precisely because Golding is vaguely aware of

these contradictions that he is able to write about them the way he does.

Whatever the case may be, these contradictions, I would like to emphasise, are the product of the capitalist mode of production, whether this mode belongs to industrial capitalism, late capitalism or any other kind of capitalism. The fact that we can detect them very clearly in Golding's fiction is because Golding's stance is itself a combination of different, occasionally contradictory intellectual positions. Golding is, by his own admission, an empiricist, spiritual pragmatist, conservative, and anarchist. A revolutionary tendency can certainly be grafted onto these "intellectual" branches in Golding's fiction. It is precisely because some of these positions cancel each other out that we can see the contradictions in Golding's novels. By combining these tendencies together, Golding is ultimately capable of playing his different ideas and themes off against each other within his texts giving us what would certainly amount to a "realist" text. It is perhaps this kind of realism which Golding meant when he stated in his interview with Nigel Forde that he is a realist. However, Golding reaches this kind of realism only to find out that: "The theme of Lord of the Flies is grief, sheer grief, grief, grief, grief."<sup>2</sup> With this conclusion in mind, that is, with the conviction that he is a realist and that the real world around us is obviously a world of grief, it is no wonder that Golding

is driven to think that there is something wrong with man in general. Thus Original Sin comes as a perfectly convenient rope to hang our mistakes on. Instead of taking the radical political stance of distinguishing between the real oppressors and the real oppressed, Golding inclines himself to an idealism which does not distinguish between different men but rather regroups them under the rubric of fallen man. But it is important to understand why Golding takes this stance. It is important to realize that Golding both as a man and as a writer seems to care more about the destiny of humankind than many of his contemporaries. This is not to suggest that the rest of them do not show such care, but to emphasise that Golding cares more about humanity in general rather than about particular social groups. It is, therefore, both interesting and sad to notice the irony or the paradox in which he falls. By insisting that man get rid of his greed and other sins before he can achieve harmony, Golding is, in a way, absolving those very people who are actually responsible for the destruction of humanity in general. His eagerness to right the "ubiquitous" wrong deprives him paradoxically of the only chance of indicating where the real blame lies. In other words, Golding is too forgiving a person to be able to administer justice to the world at large which he is eager to purify.

By the same token, however, that is, by being a great generaliser, Golding is able to look further ahead than

many others to a time when people could stop writing utopias, satires and antiutopias. He puts forward his solution as follows:

We must produce *homo moralis*, the human being who cannot kill his own kind, nor exploit them nor rob them. Then no one will need to write utopias, satires or antiutopias for we shall be inhabitants of utopias as long as we can stay on the bicycle; and perhaps a little\_\_not much, but a little\_\_dull.<sup>4</sup>

Although this solution is certainly worthy of humankind in the sense that man should be able theoretically to produce *homo moralis*, it can still be seen as problematic. It is abundantly clear that this proposition is an idealistic rather than a realistic one. We have seen Golding claim that he is a realist. Yet nothing can be further from reality or realism than his proposition. If human beings can produce *homo moralis* realistically, why haven't they done so yet? If they are incapable of producing *homo moralis* again realistically, what is the point in asking them to produce *homo moralis*? It is clear that Golding is not a realist in the "real" sense of the word but only as could be discerned from the appearances of things. Golding is not able to see the real, important connections between the empirical reality and the ontological one. Instead of the ontological reality, Golding posits an idealist one, a reality which cannot be achieved in this world, at least not in the way he is suggesting it. To say that we must produce *homo moralis* is

certainly a great thought, but is the world in which we live really produced by what we consciously think and wish? By insisting that we must produce *homo moralis*, Golding takes it for granted that our consciousness produces the real objective world rather than the other way round.

It is this mistaken hypothesis that underlies Golding's fiction. The ultimate consequence of this attitude is a wedge driven between a "heightened" consciousness, perhaps a tortured one, and a real capitalist society in the process of rapid degeneration. In other words, the ultimate consequence is alienation. The answer to the problems of this society is not, of course, by returning to religion as Golding does in Darkness Visible, nor is it by a return to the glory of the Neanderthal Man in his innocence. In A View from the Spire, Crompton writes:

In Darkness Visible Golding has plunged into spiritual mysteries which at best may only be seen through a glass darkly, at worst may be looked on at one's peril. Small wonder, then, that he has been unwilling to discuss them further, has indeed prefaced his book with Virgil's prayer as he set out to describe Aeneas's descent into the underworld and the forbidden sights he there beheld: "sit mihi fas audita loqui"\_\_ may it be allowed to me to speak what I have heard.<sup>55</sup>

It is interesting to see the implications of this passage. What we actually end up with is an absolute injunction against thinking. First, we are fed the invaluable information that life is really nothing but spiritual mysteries. Otherwise, why should Golding waste

his time if these mysteries mean nothing to him? Secondly, who would be so crazy as to risk their lives in the pursuit of knowledge? There is nothing which could be known in the first place. These spiritual mysteries at best may only be seen through a glass darkly, at worst may be looked on at one's peril. But one is obliged to ask the question: "How can we still call those things spiritual mysteries if we manage to penetrate into them and know what they are?" Crompton writes in the same chapter:

Although Golding has consistently refused to talk about Darkness Visible, its central position in the canon of his work is immediately apparent, for this is the novel where he has explored unflinchingly those subjects that trouble and fascinate him most\_\_ the extremes of behaviour of which men are capable, their propensities for absolute good or evil, their endlessly paradoxical saintliness and sinfulness. And behind these lie the mysteries of the spiritual world that continually surround us but are largely closed to us, invisible, forgotten or ignored for much of most men's lives. It is these mysteries that Golding penetrates, this darkness that he attempts to illuminate, using two characters who live primarily in a spiritual dimension although at opposite poles within it.<sup>6</sup>

It would be interesting to see how Crompton's "propensities for absolute good or evil" would square with Mountjoy's "there is no spirit, no absolute." The fact that there is a clear self-contradiction in this passage is evident. For how can Golding penetrate the impenetrable? We are told that these mysteries are largely closed to us, invisible, forgotten or ignored for much of most men's lives. Or does Crompton mean to suggest that

Golding is actually not one of us and the capacity to penetrate the impenetrable is available only to one Brit among fifty five million others? It becomes clear from this analysis that the return to mysteries which are largely supported by religion will not get us anywhere. I certainly do not mean to suggest that people should not believe in God if they wish to do so. But to transform this religious belief into obfuscation, obscurantism and mystification and parade it as a solution to our problems is certainly dangerous. I do believe that the reality of this world is objective and thus knowable (noble) to those who wish to know it and who do not insist that it is we who create this objective reality by our own consciousness. No amount of rhetoric will be able to force the sun to rise from the west.

The contradictions in Golding's writings are not only constituted in his fiction but they also extend beyond it to his autobiographical observations. In "Belief and Creativity", Golding writes:

If there has been any coherent argument in what I have said, it leads to a proposition that could see the end of all literary criticism and analysis, whatever you may think of that possibility. The proposition is that writing, when you get down to it, like running, like eating, like pursuit, is a simple, direct thing, uncomplicated, natural, like the act of *being*, a wholeness which is in itself a defier of analysis."

If we seriously believe that what Golding says here is true, then analysis is dead. If writing is a defier of

analysis, how can anyone hope to analyse it? Yet, only two pages later, Golding writes: "Well there it is. Who was it said "If Mr So-and-so has experienced the indescribable he had better not try to describe it?" An amusing remark but at the same time a pusillanimous one. It is our business to describe the indescribable."<sup>28</sup> I must mention here that it is only five lines later in this very article that Golding writes: "If you have detected contradictions and some screaming fallacies in what I have said, I wish you luck."<sup>29</sup>

I attempted to discuss these contradictions in Golding's fiction in order to show that it is possible to identify both them as well as their causes. I believe that these contradictions can be resolved. However, they cannot be resolved in the realm of consciousness. Their real resolution can only be achieved in the external, material world. Golding is perhaps the only writer in twentieth-century Britain who has shown these contradictions genuinely. One of my main aims in this study was to assert the importance of political criticism since it is the only hope in exposing the real locus of evil. If we glide into other kinds of criticism whereby we make language itself our object of analysis in isolation from the political reality of our world, we might end up like Wilfred Townsend Barclay putting the word reality between inverted commas, in other words, quote reality unquote. At this historical moment, we cannot afford to immerse ourselves

in a criticism which celebrates the endless, perhaps aesthetically enjoyable, circularity of linguistic signifiers.

The contradictions in Golding's fiction are implicitly but aptly "crystallised" in a metaphor which he himself uses: "I had a passion for words in themselves, and collected them like stamps or birds' eggs." If Golding had really stuck to the principle of allowing this difference to work among real women and men in history, he would have probably been the first British propagandist for emancipation. What differentiates stamps or birds' eggs from each other is precisely their difference. Instead, Golding goes for the "metaphysical" Word in his search for the isness of man: "What man is ... that I burn to know." In other words, Golding paradoxically searches in his fiction for the utopian man rather than the historical one. Golding is not, of course, wrong to have "a lifelong love of rhythm, sound, and in particular, rhyme,"<sup>10</sup> but perhaps to celebrate this love in our century is a bit premature.

## NOTES

1. William Golding, The Hot Gates (London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1965), p. 123.
2. David Punter, "Blake, Marxism and Dialectic," Literature and History, 6 (Autumn 1977), 224.
3. William Golding, A Moving Target (1982; rpt. London and Boston: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 163.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 184.
5. Don Crompton, A View from the Spire: William Golding's Later Novels (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1985), p. 95.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 94.
7. Golding, A Moving Target, p. 200.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 202.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 147.

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